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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**IDEOLOGICAL RADICALIZATION: A CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING WHY YOUTH
IN MAJOR U.S. METROPOLITAN AREAS ARE MORE
LIKELY TO BECOME RADICALIZED**

by

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March 2017

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UNDERSTANDING WHY YOUTH IN MAJOR U.S. METROPOLITAN AREAS
ARE MORE LIKELY TO BECOME RADICALIZED**

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ABSTRACT

The number of disconnected youth, those ages 16 to 24 who are not in school and are not employed, has reached significant levels in the United States and Western Europe. This trend is coupled with the fact that more and more foreign fighters are joining Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria. In particular, Western youth have been the target of radicalization by ISIS and other terrorist groups, and the appeal and lure of such groups seem unlikely to subside. A similar trend is also evident among youth in Muslim countries where the numbers of foreign fighters and terrorist groups seem unlikely to decrease. According to recent estimates, over 28,000 foreign fighters have joined ISIS in Syria and Iraq since 2011.

The fact that so many youth have been radicalized to join terrorist groups is a cause for concern that requires closer scrutiny, understanding, and action by Western and other governments. The explanations and motivations as to why youth join terrorist groups abound; these include lack of education, poverty, religion discrimination, family background, and political and economic marginalization, among others. This research seeks to answer the question, are the youth in the United States, who are disconnected, more likely to become radicalized to terrorism? To answer this, various theoretical frameworks were researched and examined, such as relative deprivation, social movement theory, and psychological perspectives, to shed light on understanding this issue.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. BACKGROUND

The issue of radicalization of second-generation Muslim youth born in Western countries by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and other global terrorist insurgency groups has become a major concern from a counter-terrorism policy perspective. Second-generation Muslim youth tend to struggle with their identity: “they identify as Muslims first and second as Europeans.”¹ Increasingly, more marginalized second generation Muslim western youth are joining the global jihad. In their study of Muslim youth in Western Europe and the U.S. radicalized to terrorism, Margarita Bizina and David Gary state, “Socially isolated, disenchanted young men turn to extremism in their search for identity, acceptance, and purpose which they are unable to find in the community more often concerned with wealth accumulation rather than healthy relationship-building.”²

B. PROBLEM STATEMENT

This thesis seeks to determine and investigate which factors may place youth in major metropolitan areas at a greater risk of ideological radicalization to terrorism. The thesis focuses particularly on the degree of youth disconnection, hypothesizing that Muslim youth in major metropolitan areas with higher rates of disconnection are at greater risk of radicalization compared to young people in large metropolitan areas with lower rates of disconnection.

More specifically, this study hopes to provide an operational definition of radicalization. Moreover, it is also intended to identify and uncover new patterns, themes, and relationships between disconnection and radicalization that may be useful to local communities, cities, and metropolitan areas in understanding how to identify such relationships.

¹ Megan. G. Oprea, “Europe’s Fear of ‘Islamophobia’ Led Directly to the Belgium Attacks,” *The Federalist*, March 22, 2016, <http://thefederalist.com/2016/03/22/europes-fear-of-islamophobia-led-directly-to-the-belgium-attacks/>.

² Margarita Bizina and Gray, H. David, “Radicalization of Youth as a Growing Concern for Counter-terrorism Policy,” *Global Security Studies* 5, no. 1 (2014): 72.

Are youth in major U.S. metropolitan areas/cities with high rates of disconnection easier targets for ideological radicalization than youth in metropolitan areas with lower disconnection rates?

C. FINDINGS

The data from the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) dealing with county-level correlates of terrorism is helpful in refining our understanding. The START study by LaFree and Bersani found evidence of terrorism at the county level and that terrorist attacks cluster in specific geographic areas.³ Specifically, their findings show that 25 percent of

all attacks occurred in just 10 counties. Manhattan, NY experienced the highest number of attacks during this time (n = 30), followed by Los Angeles County, CA (n = 19), San Diego County, CA (n = 16), Washington, DC (n = 15), and Miami Dade County, FL (n = 14).⁴

However, smaller counties, such as Bernalillo County, New Mexico; Tulsa County, Oklahoma; and Lane County, Oregon, have also been targets of terrorism attacks.⁵ The START study by LaFree and Bersani offers the following geographic profile of what a “typical” U.S. county looks like that has experienced a terrorist attack for the period 1990–2010:⁶

- a larger population
- more young men aged 15 to 24 years
- a greater proportion of Asian, Hispanic, and foreign-born residents
- higher rates of language diversity⁷

This profile offered by START is extremely helpful in trying to understand all the characteristics that lead to terrorism. However, the study observed a shift in the profile

³ Gary LaFree and Bianca Bersani, *County-level Correlates of Terrorism in the United States, 1990 to 2010* (College Park, MD: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2013).

⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

from attacks in the 1990s as compared to those counties that experienced an attack from 2001–2010. The researchers explained, “2001 to 2010 had smaller proportions of males aged 15 to 24 years, higher levels of concentrated disadvantage, greater proportions of foreign-born citizens, and higher rates of language diversity.”⁸ The study is careful not to suggest that terrorist attacks are more likely undertaken by youth who are poor, speak a foreign language, and are foreign-born.⁹

D. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis outlines theories such as relative deprivation, social movement theory, social distance theory, consolidated inequality theory, and psychological frameworks to understand the motivations for radicalization. In addition, it also explores disconnection as an occurrence through the prism of education, unemployment, underemployment, and employment to examine root causes of how they diverge and intersect at a macro level. This research confirms the finding from other research studies that radicalized youth and individuals and those involved in terrorism do not necessarily lack education or come from low income family backgrounds. One of the central themes for future research emerging from this research is the concept of “frustrated achiever” and how it may affect youth with education and without education in terms of radicalization. In considering radicalization to terrorist groups, when combining insights from the existing literature, it appears that a collective anger based on perceived injustices to and alienation of one’s group may be a source of radicalization.

The recommendations of this thesis are listed not in order of importance but in order of action needed for consideration. Focused attention is required to address the issue of radicalization of youth and should consist of integration points at various levels within the United States. Despite the fact that this study did not find a relationship between youth disconnection and radicalization in large metropolitan areas, it does not preclude this from becoming an issue in the future. Indeed, future research on “frustrated achievers” and representative radicalism may find such a linkage.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The British MI5 warned in 2007 that Al Qaeda and its affiliates were seeking to radicalize children as young as 15 into mounting terror attacks in the United Kingdom. In like vein, the former Director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency warned that Al Qaeda was seeking to radicalize western youth for the purpose of mounting terror attacks in the West. Some estimates suggest that youth between 15 and 18 years of age comprise 20 percent of all suicide bombers (Samuel, 2011: 109–113). As we shall see, youth are particularly susceptible to radicalization into violent extremism of the ISIS and similar ills, for a variety of reasons.

Rama Krishna, February 11, 2016

A. BACKGROUND

From a counter-terrorism policy perspective, the issue of radicalization by Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other global terrorist insurgency groups of second-generation Muslim youth born in Western countries has become a major concern. First-generation Muslims in Europe and probably in other Western nations often still retain ties with the birth country and often find it difficult to integrate and learn the new norms and cultural nuances. Second-generation Muslim youth, on the other hand, tend to struggle with their identity: “they identify as Muslims first and second as Europeans.”¹ Increasingly, more marginalized second-generation Muslim Western youth are joining the global jihad. In their study of Muslim youth in Western Europe and the United States radicalization to terrorism, Margarita Bizina and David Gary state, “Socially isolated, disenchanted young men turn to extremism in their search for identity, acceptance, and purpose which they are unable to find in the community more often concerned with wealth accumulation rather than healthy relationship-building.”²

¹ Megan. G. Oprea, “Europe’s Fear of ‘Islamophobia’ Led Directly to the Belgium Attacks,” *The Federalist*, March 22, 2016, <http://thefederalist.com/2016/03/22/europes-fear-of-islamophobia-led-directly-to-the-belgium-attacks/>.

² Margarita Bizina and Gray, H. David, “Radicalization of Youth as a Growing Concern for Counter-terrorism Policy,” *Global Security Studies* 5, no. 1 (2014): 72–79.

The general perception among second-generation Muslim youth (whether born as a Muslim or those converted to Islam) is that material things in Western society are valued over building relationships, and this makes them feel socially marginalized. Many of them have never traveled to the birthplace or country of their parents, have no regional or ethnic identity, and often do not speak the language of their parents' birthplace, nor have they ever traveled; however, and they do not feel welcomed in their new home country in the West. All of these factors can contribute to, and possibly lead to, radicalization among certain groups of Western youth who may experience such personal conflict. The only identity these second generation have left is their religion to some degree, which makes them more likely targets to become radicalized.

In late 2014, according to a CIA assessment and as reported by CNN, the estimated number of foreign, or international fighters in Syria was believed to be more than 15,000.³ In 2015, the number of foreign or international fighters reportedly increased by about 100 percent to approximately 30,000.⁴ According to intelligence estimates from the United States, the number of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq peaked in 2015; however, those numbers have since come down. It is believed that about one-third of these foreign fighters come from Western Europe, and the number of U.S. fighters is believed to be about 250, up from the 2014 estimate of about 100 fighters.⁵ Trends similar to these are seen with the youth of other European countries who are joining ISIS in Syria. Despite efforts by Western governments to prevent their youth from joining ISIS, the internet and social media continue to be used as tools to recruit and radicalize young people in Western societies.

Though the number of U.S. fighters in Syria appears to be relatively small as compared to other Western countries, it has the potential to become a significant homeland security threat if it is not acknowledged, understood, and addressed. Experts

³ Jim Sciutto, Crawford, Jamie, and Carter Chelsea, "ISIS Can 'Muster' between 20,000 and 31,500 Fighters, CIA Says," CNN, September 12, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/11/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq>.

⁴ "Number of Foreign Fighters in Syria Has Doubled in Past Year—Report," *Russia Today (RT)*, September 27, 2015, <https://www.rt.com/news/316644-jihadists-flow-double-syria/>.

⁵ Ibid.

argue that growing mistrust and negative opinion about their government's foreign policy is a major driver for Western youth joining ISIS and other terrorist groups.⁶ Other factors, such as political, economic, and social marginalization, are also important factors to keep in mind, as demonstrated in this study. Many or all of the fighters from the United States and Western Europe also carry passports of their home countries, and this poses a unique set of terrorism issues and challenges. The argument is that the enemy is "already in the country by birth or naturalization."⁷ Law enforcement agencies from Western governments must pay close attention to "civil liberties and extremism propaganda."⁸

According to FBI Director James Comey, "ISIS terrorist cells are now active in all 50 U.S. states."⁹ This assessment by the FBI director is a reminder that the threat is real and serves as a telltale sign that more should be done to understand the reasons and motivations why youth join terrorist groups, and if there is a nexus between disconnection and radicalization. Disconnection refers to youth who are not involved in education and not employed. It is the intent and purpose of this thesis to explore the relationship between disconnection and radicalization among U.S. youth in some of the major metropolitan areas in depth as well as to understand the nature and the major underpinnings of this relationship.

B. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The central question driving this research study is: What are the root causes that lead to radicalization in U.S. youth ages 16 to 24? This study examines alternative explanations for youth radicalization to assess which factors are most important in youth radicalization. This research focuses specifically on arguments about the socioeconomic status of American youth: their socioeconomic position, their degree of educational

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bizina and David, "Radicalization of Youth," 72.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Chuck Goudie, "ISIS Present in All 50 States, FBI Director Says," *ABC 7 News Chicago*, February 25, 2015, <http://abc7chicago.com/news/isis-present-in-all-50-states-fbi-director-says/534732/>.

attainment, their socioeconomic integration or marginalization, and their overall level of connection with or disconnection from social and economic institutions.

C. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This thesis seeks to determine and investigate which factors may place youth in major metropolitan areas at a greater risk of ideological radicalization to terrorism. The thesis focuses particularly on the degree of youth disconnection, hypothesizing that Muslim youth in major metropolitan areas with higher rates of disconnection are at greater risk of radicalization compared to young people in large metropolitan areas with lower rates of disconnection.

More specifically, this study hopes to provide an operational definition of radicalization. Moreover, it is also intended to identify and uncover new patterns, themes, and relationships between disconnection and radicalization that may be useful to local communities, cities, and metropolitan areas in understanding how to identify such relationships.

U.S. policy makers, especially the congressional Homeland Security Committee and other committees with homeland security or intelligence oversight, will find the study useful to ensure proper funding, oversight, and policies related to counter-radicalization programs are developed and implemented at the federal and state levels. The federal government especially the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the FBI, and other federal government stakeholders are interested in understanding the triggers and motivators at the local metropolitan areas/cities that lead to radicalization. To also ensure that proper focus, attention, resources, community partnership, and collaboration mechanisms should be considered and implemented.

State and local governments will have a better understanding of how to act with respect to radicalization once the relationship between disconnection and radicalization is better understood. Collaboration, trust, and transparency are critical to federal and state partners and agencies, local law enforcement, and tribal entities as well as community leaders to find common ground and practical solutions to the radicalization problem.

D. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

Studying radicalization, in particular the ideology and beliefs of individuals, is highly complex and subjective. Understanding the thinking and beliefs, as well the narratives resulting in terrorist acts are not always clear, and the motivations and drivers that fuels terrorist violence is even less clearly defined.¹⁰ The study of radicalization is highly contested, which leaves it open to challenges, interpretation, and misunderstanding. The research of this study is an attempt to move the needle on the subject just a little bit and to add to the political, socioeconomic, public discourse while understanding the causes that give rise to radicalization.

The goal of this research is to shed light on the social, economic, and political factors that may cause disconnection leading to radicalization among 16- to 24-year-old individuals in metropolitan areas. This age group is the more disconnected as compared to other age groups in the United States and has been found to be more sympathetic to terrorist groups compared to other age groups in Britain.¹¹ In the United States, in particular, this age group appears to be most vulnerable and at risk given high disconnection rates as outlined below. This thesis examines the role of factors such as family background, socioeconomic conditions, income levels, access to education, religious affiliation, race, ethnicity, and gender for both disconnection and radicalization. This research study's purpose is to investigate and understand if the factors related to the disconnection among youth are the same factors that lead youth to be radicalized.

E. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to investigate and answer the research questions that follow.

¹⁰ Change Institute, *Studies into Violent Radicalization; Lot 2—The Beliefs Ideologies and Narratives* (London: Change Institute, 2008), http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/doc_centre/terrorism/docs/ec_radicalisation_study_on_ideology_and_narrative_en.pdf.

¹¹ “British-born, Rich, and Isolated Muslims More Likely to be Radicalized—Study,” *Russia Times (RT)*, September 25, 2014, <https://www.rt.com/uk/190588-british-depressed-muslims-radicalized/>.

(1) Primary Research Question

Are youth in major U.S. metropolitan areas/cities with high rates of disconnection easier targets for ideological radicalization than youth in metropolitan areas with lower disconnection rates? The hypothesis for this primary research question is that youth between the ages of 16 to 24 in metropolitan areas with high rates of disconnection are more likely to be radicalized compared to youth in metropolitan areas with lower rates of disconnection.

(2) Secondary Research Question

Which societal factors and influencers are the leading causes of radicalization among youth in metropolitan areas with high rates of disconnection? The hypothesis for this secondary research question is that youth race and religious ideology (especially jihadist) are major drivers of youth radicalization to terrorist groups such as ISIS.

F. METHODS

The methods of conducting the research consist of two parts, quantitative and qualitative. Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses for this study rely on secondary data from the New America Foundation on terrorism in the United States after 9/11 up to September 2016, as well as other data. The data is broken down by foreign or domestic (U.S.) attacks and ideology (right wing or jihadist), and it includes about 30 variables listed in Appendix A. First, this thesis includes an analysis of the descriptive statistics to provide a context for the data and the hypothesis and purpose of this research. Second, the thesis measures the extent of radicalization after September 11, 2001, by looking at the number of individuals killed, the number of victims wounded, and the number of terrorist attacks. While there is no meaningful measure of radicalization as a construct currently, these three dependent indicators provide a useful attempt to quantify it. The data from New America in itself cannot meaningfully measure radicalization directly, so a combination of these key indicators was used to draw out the hidden variable of

radicalization.¹² From an analysis standpoint, this study compares averages, means, and modes and uses cross-break tables to report the data as it relates to age, ethnicity, gender, and other variables.

The qualitative data for this research comes from numerous secondary data sources, including the George Washington University Program on Extremism, the Terrorism and Extremist Violence in the United States (TEVUS) data from START at the University of Maryland, and the research of John Mueller at the Ohio State University. Data from the National Institute of Justice supplements these sources to provide a complete picture based on recent, reliable, contextually applicable, accessible, and open source data of the psychological, environment, political, and social factors in the United States. The research for this thesis is rooted in grounded social science.

This study includes an extensive literature review of youth radicalization. The literature review includes scholarship on radicalization of young people in Muslim countries, Western Europe, and the United States to understand the reasons, motivations, and underlying assumptions why they are radicalized and join terrorist groups. The literature review also highlights significant ethnic, religious, cultural, social, political, and institutional similarities and differences that helped shape and refine the research questions, hypothesis, and assumptions.

G. LITERATURE REVIEW

One can group the literature into two predominant schools of thought as to why youth are radicalized and are joining ISIS. On the one hand, “there are those who believe ideology, culture and religion are the primary drivers.”¹³ These studies suggest that the reasons why Western Muslim youth are radicalized are because of the involvement of the West in an unjust war in Syria and the Middle East (they see this as an assault on their

¹² Gary LaFree, Kathleen Smarick, and Shira Fishman, *Community-level Indicators of Radicalization: A Data and Measurement Workshop* (Washington, DC: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2010), <http://www.start.umd.edu/research-projects/community-level-indicators-radicalization-data-and-measurement-workshop>.

¹³ Ömer Taşpınar, “You Can’t Understand Why People Join ISIS without Understanding Relative Deprivation,” *World Post*, March 15, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amer-tapaenar-/isis-relative-deprivation_b_6912460.html.

Muslim values and identity), the desecration of the Prophet Mohammed, which resulted in Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris, among reasons.¹⁴ The other view contends that “social and economic factors trump ideology and religion. Lack of education, unemployment, poverty and the absence of upward mobility causes a growing sense of frustration and radicalization.”¹⁵ The authors focus on lack of social integration,¹⁶ lack of economic participation, social isolation, exclusion, and being viewed as second class citizens.¹⁷ Both views are important since they both lead to the same outcome despite different drivers that fuel them—disconnected and marginalized youth, who are pushed to the societal edges and who have pledged allegiance to jihad because the society in which they live ignores them. Therefore, they have become easy targets for radicalization. Yet another group of scholars highlight psychological causes that may stem from either cultural or socioeconomic sources, arguing that those radicalized are thrill seekers, identity seekers, revenge seekers, or status seekers.¹⁸ It is apparent from this brief survey that the reasons why Western youth, especially Western Muslim youth, become radicalized and join terrorist groups are varied. A deeper study of the literature on radicalization and terrorism appears in the next chapter.

While the literature on terrorism seems to concur there is hardly any connection between poverty and radicalization, some academics and journalists assert that there is a causal relationship between disconnection and radicalization. According to Margarita Bizina and David Gary, “Socially isolated, disenchanted young men turn to extremism in their search for identity, acceptance, and purpose which they are unable to find in the community more often concerned with wealth accumulation rather than healthy

¹⁴ Syed Kamall, “What Drives Young Muslims to Radicalization. Many Elders Understand We Can Both be European and Muslim. Now We Need to Teach Our Children How,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/syed-kamall-what-drives-young-muslims-to-radicalization-1423169290>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ William Wolfberg, “The Homegrown Jihad: A Comparative Study of Youth Radicalization in the United States and Europe” (master’s thesis, University of South Florida, 2012), <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/4421>.

¹⁷ Bizina and David, “Radicalization of Youth,” 72–79.

¹⁸ John M. Venhaus, *Why Youth Join al-Qaeda?* (Special Report 236) (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2010), <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR236Venhaus.pdf>.

relationship-building.”¹⁹ It is the socioeconomic context of these young men that leads them to search for an ideology, religion, or culture to give them a positive identity. A general perception among second-generation Muslim youth (whether born as a Muslim or those converted to Islam), and often the reality, is that Western society values material things over building relationships.²⁰ Thus, they may seek a culture or identity that is non-Western. Jon-Christopher Bua asserts that African-American and Muslim youth in America are two groups that are both disconnected in society for many of the same reasons.²¹ There is a possible connection between Muslim youth and African American youth because they are the racial groups experiencing the highest conversion rate to Islam, as is shown in a later chapter. The central theme regarding youth disconnection requires further examination and inquiry to understand the underlying reasons for such occurrence. Disconnection is one of the key variables that this thesis investigates.

H. OVERVIEW OF UPCOMING CHAPTERS

This thesis consists of six sections. Chapter II provides an overview of the seminal literature on radicalization and explores the concept of radicalization from an individual and group perspectives to shed light on the definitional paradoxes in the literature. It builds on the various definitions found in the literature to offer its own definition of radicalization and disconnection to examine whether there is a connection between the two. Chapter II then provides a foundation and theoretical perspectives of relative deprivation, psychological motivations, social movement, social distance, and consolidated inequality theories and frameworks to understand disconnection and radicalization.

Chapter III offers a demographic overview of youth disconnection in the United States followed by a deeper dive into what the youth disconnection profile looks like in some of the metropolitan areas in the United States. It also shows that the education participation level and dropout rates serve as important indicators of youth participation.

¹⁹ Bizina and David, “Radicalization of Youth,” 72.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Jon-Christopher Bua, “Disaffected Youth Open to Exploitation,” *Talk Radio Service News*, June 8, 2015, <http://www.talkradionews.com/opinion/2015/06/08/disaffected-youth-open-to-exploitation.html>.

Additionally, this chapter examines youth unemployment, underemployment, and employment to shed light on the issue of youth disconnection to provide meaning and context and to help frame the issue. Chapter III builds a bridge between disconnection and radicalization and serves as an important building block for the rest of the chapters.

Chapters IV focuses on radicalization of youth to terrorism by looking at the issue in Muslim countries, Western Europe, and the United States, in particular, to frame the nature and scope of the issue. Chapter V provides as quantitative statistical analysis to examine and explore the relationship between radicalization and disconnection. Finally, Chapter VI provides a summary of the findings. It offers some recommendations and steps that can be implemented and taken in the United States to mitigate the potential threat and to decrease the risk of radicalization within the youth population ages 16 to 24, broadly, and within Muslim youth, more specifically.

II. RADICALIZATION TO TERRORISM IN THE LITERATURE

And finally, we face a real threat from radicalized individuals here in the United States. Whether it's a shooter at a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin, a plane flying into a building in Texas, or the extremists who killed 168 people at the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, America has confronted many forms of violent extremism in our history. Deranged or alienated individuals—often U.S. citizens or legal residents—can do enormous damage, particularly when inspired by larger notions of violent jihad. And that pull towards extremism appears to have led to the shooting at Fort Hood and the bombing of the Boston Marathon.

President Barack Obama
National Defense University in Washington, DC
May 23, 2013

A. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism and political violence are not new societal issues. Globally, terrorism has increased since 9/11 and the amount of research on the topic has subsequently grown significantly.²² The central question of this thesis is, “Are Muslim youth in major U.S. metropolitan areas with high rates of disconnection at a greater risk of radicalization than those in areas with lower rates?” Radicalization to terrorism does not occur in a void. This thesis argues that connecting the structural—social, economic, political—and psychological factors that lead to terrorism provides critical linkage to understanding individual behaviors. An understanding of the economic, “social and political conditions that make terrorism more likely” than in other circumstances forms an integral part of the discussion.²³ The hypothesis investigated in this thesis starts with the assumption, detailed in the next chapter, that many young people feel disconnected from their society, meaning that they lack educational and economic opportunities. They also experience relative deprivation—a feeling of dissatisfaction people have stemming from the fact that

²² National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, *Background Report: 9/11, Ten Years Later* (Washington, DC: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2011), https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/announcements/BackgroundReport_10YearsSince9_11.pdf.

²³ Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics*, 13, no. 4 (1981): 379–399.

they perceive that they have less than what they should and could have. This dissatisfaction results from feeling disconnected from one's society and over time leads to frustration, which ultimately may result in violence. Critically, young people need not be personally lacking education or income to feel disconnected. They may feel representatively disconnected, wherein their grievance is felt on behalf of a larger group. To answer the research questions and evaluate this argument requires drawing on the existing body of knowledge regarding both the meaning and causes of radicalization to terrorism.

B. DEFINING RADICALIZATION

There is no universally accepted definition of radicalization in the literature on terrorism studies or in the homeland security arena. Lorenzo Vidino states that disagreement runs deep, and in some instances, scholars emphasize “structural factors [that] due to political tensions and cultural cleavages are trigger events causing radicalization, while others emphasize personal factors, such as the shock of a life-changing event or the influence of a mentor.”²⁴ It is also likely that there will never be an agreed upon definition.²⁵ The term radicalization has been in existence for “over a century in the United States, and has been applied to groups or populations perceived as politically marginal or ideologically threatening.”²⁶ Many scholars of radicalization emphasize the importance of an individual's prior identification with a group or cause before radicalization occur, yet they are vague about whether radicalization entails engaging in violence. In their definition of radicalization, McCauley and Moskalenko

²⁴ Lorenzo Vidino, *Countering Radicalization in the America. Lessons from Europe* (Special Report 262 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2010), http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/SR262%20-%20Countering_Radicalization_in_America.pdf, 3.

²⁵ Randy Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011): 7–36.

²⁶ Jonathan J. Edwards, “Figuring Radicalization: Congressional Narratives of Homeland Security and American Muslim Communities,” *Journal Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2015): 102–120, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2014.996168>.

note movement of “beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the in-group.”²⁷

Other academics and government agencies explicitly make violence an integral part of radicalization in their definitions.²⁸ For example, the FBI inherently associates radicalization with violence in that those committing violence justify it with some social or political agenda.²⁹ This is very similar to the Danes, who, however, put the adjective “violent” in front of radicalization to distinguish it from nonviolent radicals.³⁰ However, the British and the Dutch do not equate radicalization with violence in their official definitions. It is apparent that state intelligence agencies view and define radicalization based on their unique country perspective and that they do not agree or use a common definition and approach. Even though these definitions are important to the context and environment in which they are used, they fall short in that they do not address the socioeconomic factors that often forms the root causes of radicalization, especially as it relates to youth.

Citing the work of Veldhuis and Stein, Randy Borum states, “any useful framework must be able to integrate mechanisms at the micro (individual) and macro

²⁷ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2008): 416.

²⁸ Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I,” 7. This work by Borum provides and lays out the various definitions on radicalization from an academic standpoint and includes definitions by governments.

²⁹ Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I.” Borum reviews governments define radicalization in its context of counter-terrorism strategy. According to Borum, the United Kingdom’s Home Office refers to radicalization simply as: “The process by which people come to support terrorism and violent extremism and, in some cases, then to join terrorist groups.” Borum reports that the Dutch Security Service (AIVD) on the other hand defines radicalization as a “Growing readiness to pursue and/or support—if necessary by undemocratic means—far-reaching changes in society that conflict with, or pose a threat to, the democratic order.” Finally, Borum also related that the Danish Intelligence Service (PET) focuses on “violent radicalization,” and defines it as, “a process by which a person to an increasing extent accepts the use of undemocratic or violent means, including terrorism, in an attempt to reach a specific political/ideological objective.” The FBI on the other hand defines radicalization as, “the process by which individuals come to believe their engagement in or facilitation of non-state violence to achieve social and political change is necessary and justified.” Ryan Hunter and Daniel Henke, “Perspective Radicalization of Islamist Terrorists in the Western World,” *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, September 2011, <https://leb.fbi.gov/2011/september/perspective-radicalization-of-islamist-terrorists-in-the-western-world>.

³⁰ Ibid.

(societal/cultural) levels.”³¹ The different existing theoretical frameworks on radicalization underscore its complex nature and cannot fit within a “cookie cutter” or uniform approach that is often neatly wrapped. To that end, this study proposes its own definition of radicalization that incorporates these levels.

Radicalization for the purpose of this study is defined as *a process whereby an individual or a group chooses to adopt, internalize, and act on a new ideology or set of beliefs aimed at challenging the prevailing social, economic, political, and status quo with or without violent outcomes*. This definition draws on the existing literature on radicalization to emphasize and integrate some of its key insights: that radicalization occurs both at the individual and group level and is a process. It takes the position that radicalization entails *acting* on a set of beliefs, not merely holding them, and those acts may or may not be violent ones. This definition goes beyond the ones found in the literature because it considers the social, economic, political, and religious environments that are often missing or overlooked in many definitions but are critical influencers, which should not be ignored.

While the focus of this thesis is on Muslim youth in the United States, it is worth emphasizing that adopting and holding Islamist radical ideas are not illegal acts; however, the intention to engage and engaging in violent acts is illegal, and this distinction is an important part of the literature review and this study.³² In their research, Jordan and Boix highlight a few themes common to radical Islamist ideologies, including shifting all blame for Islam’s problems to the West, adopting anti-democratic policies, and supporting terrorism acts directly or indirectly.³³ Islamic radicalization can be considered on two levels: (1) where violence is used to seek a particular outcome,

³¹ Tinka Veldhuis and J. Staun, *Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2009).

³² Defense Human Resource Activity, “Terrorism 101: The Radicalization Process,” accessed October 15, 2016, [http://www.dhra.mil/perserec/osg/terrorism/terrorism-101.htm#Terrorism 101](http://www.dhra.mil/perserec/osg/terrorism/terrorism-101.htm#Terrorism%20101).

³³ Javier Jordan and Luisa Boix, “Al-Qaeda and Western Islam,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 1 (2004): 1–17, doi 10.1080/09546550490445983.

violence is seen as the only means to reach an objective, and (2) societal change is desired and sought but violence is not the primary driver to affect the necessary change.³⁴

It is imperative at this point to distinguish between Islamist and jihadist ideology. According to the BBC,

Islamists aim to reorder government and society in accordance with Islamic law, or Sharia. Jihadists see violent struggle as necessary to eradicate obstacles to restoring God's rule on Earth and defending the Muslim community, or umma, against infidels and apostates.³⁵

In an article he wrote, Daniel Pipes also echoed a similar theme about the “antagonism of Islam toward non-Muslims.”³⁶ Pipes specifically indicates that the goal of Islamism is “to turn Islam, a religion and civilization, into an ideology.”³⁷ This distinction is an important one and is key to this study's definition of radicalization. Not all Islamists use violence, whereas jihadists usually do. Becoming a terrorist is a gradual development but exactly how that occurs is still not clearly understood.

C. CAUSES OF RADICALIZATION

Martha Crenshaw's seminal work on the causes of terrorism is the model many use to outline and describe root causes of radicalization. Many as a model to outline and describe root causes of radicalization have used the seminal work of Martha Crenshaw on the causes of terrorism.³⁸ Crenshaw notes that there is a theoretical framework for various types and causes of terrorism.³⁹ Additionally, she states that we must consider the environment in which terrorism occurs and that not everyone who holds the same views

³⁴ Ibid., 12.

³⁵ “What is Jihadism,” BBC, December 11, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30411519>.

³⁶ Daniel Pipes, “Distinguishing between Islam and Islamism.” Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 30, 1998, <http://www.danielpipes.org/954/distinguishing-between-islam-and-islamism>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Matthew Francis, “What Causes Radicalization? Main Lines of Consensus in Recent Research,” Radicalization Research, January 24, 2012, <http://www.radicalisationresearch.org/guides/francis-2012-causes-2/>.

³⁹ Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism.”

as a terrorist group does participates in or is involved in terrorism.⁴⁰ Within Crenshaw's framework, the causes of terrorism are grouped into three major categories: situational variables, the strategy of the terrorist organization, and ideological or individual participation.⁴¹ This thesis focuses on two of the three: the impact that situational or structural variables and individual-level variables have on radicalization.

Within the situational category, Crenshaw draws a distinction between what are called preconditions, "(those factors that set the stage for terrorism in the long run) and precipitants (specific events that immediately precede the occurrence of terrorism)."⁴² Moreover, Crenshaw breaks down preconditions into enabling (known as trigger events) and motivating factors (or elements that inspire terrorism).⁴³ Precipitants on the other hand are viewed as being very similar to direct causes of terrorism.⁴⁴ The discussion now turns to the several of these situational and individual variables.

1. Modernity

Modernity is identified as a precondition for terrorism. Francis makes the argument that, "the presence of the internet, mass transit, and urbanization all bring people closer together, allowing for swift movements of individuals and ideas."⁴⁵ However, the opposite is also true: modernity can also leave a large segment of the population and groups of people behind because of lack of access to the means that connect people and individuals. This can have a marginalizing effect. This has led to a focus on socioeconomic conditions that promote radicalization, and chief among them are "poverty and lack of social mobility through educational and economic opportunities."⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 381.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Francis, "What Causes Radicalization?"

⁴⁶ Ibid.

2. Poverty and Marginalization

Poverty and the lack of economic opportunity are key factors that may directly or indirectly be associated with violence or terrorism.⁴⁷ At a March 2002 development summit in Monterey, California, President George W. Bush made the statement, “We fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terror,” which has since been used as confirmation that poverty causes terrorism.⁴⁸ The case for and against poverty and socioeconomic factors as igniters of terrorism abound in the literature.⁴⁹ Poverty as a predictor of radicalization has been researched by various scholars, who have argued it is not a sole cause.⁵⁰ Some studies have repeatedly sought to debunk the idea that poverty and the lack of education cause terrorism. In this view, terrorism is not just a third or developing-world issue where poverty and social inequality are prevalent. Social factors, such as terrorist ideology, westernization and modernization, religious fundamentalism, group or psychological factors, and a host of others, can all have contributing influences on radicalization to terrorism.⁵¹

The research finding against poverty and lack of education as causes has been corroborated by recently leaked ISIS documents, which show the average foreign fighter to be “young, well well-educated but only possess a rudimentary understanding of

⁴⁷ Guilain Denoeux and Lynn Carter, *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism* (Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development, 2009); Lorena Cohan, Beth Mayberry, Gustavo Payan, and John Rosiak, *Understanding Youth Crime and Violence in Honduras: Summary Report Findings* (Boston: Education Development Center, 2014), <http://idd.edc.org/sites/idd.edc.org/files/Understanding%20Youth%20Crime%20and%20Violence%20in%20Honduras%20-%20Summary%20Report%20Findings.pdf>.

⁴⁸ “Remarks by Mr. George W. Bush, U.S. President at the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico March 22, 2002,” United Nations, <http://www.un.org/ffd/statements/usaE.htm>.

⁴⁹ James A. Piazza, “Rooted in Poverty? Terrorism, Poor Economic Development, and Social Cleavage,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18, no. 1 (2006): 159–177; Alan Krueger and Jitka Malečková, “Education, Poverty, and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?,” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17, no. 4 (2003): 119–144.

⁵⁰ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Inside Jihadism: Understanding Jihadi Movements Worldwide* (New York: Routledge: 2009).

⁵¹ Caroline F. Ziemke, “Perceived Oppression and Relative Deprivation: Social Factors Contributing to Terrorism,” in *“In the Same Light as Slavery:” Building a Global Antiterrorism Consensus*, ed. Joseph McMillian, 97–127 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ndu/global_at_consensus.pdf.

Islam.”⁵² Terrorism is not considered to be the preferred choice of the poor masses, but rather the preference of a select few, if we accept the terrorism research in this regard. As stated by Helena Roy, “the educated individual becomes willing to pursue a political grievance through violence when there are few alternatives available.”⁵³ In a study conducted by Krueger and Malečková, they “found that terrorist recruits tend to have relatively high levels of education and wealth.”⁵⁴ In addition, John M. Venhaus states that the rhetoric of poverty is simply that—recruits do not come from the poor masses.⁵⁵ Moreover, Mehmet Fevzi Dörtbudak, citing the work of Mark Sageman, notes, the “vast majority of terrorists come from the middle class, which suggests that poverty is not the primary cause of terrorism.”⁵⁶

However, others insist that there is a relationship between economic marginalization and radicalization. In his work on Islamist radicalism in Central Asia, Ahmed Rashid found a relationship between youth unemployment and radicalization.⁵⁷ In his work on radicalization among Palestinian youth, Halil Khashan echoes a very similar finding.⁵⁸ According to anecdotal evidence from a variety of countries, “poverty does bear on terrorist activity and cannot be overlooked.”⁵⁹

⁵² Lizzie Deardan, “ISIS Documents Leak Reveals Profile of Average Militant as Young, Well-educated but with Only ‘Basic’ Knowledge of Islamic Law,” *Independent*, April 21, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-documents-leak-reveals-profile-of-average-militant-as-young-well-educated-but-with-only-basic-a6995111.html>.

⁵³ Helena Roy, “Where Education and Wealth Fails: Demystifying the Causes of Terrorism,” *Cambridge Globalist*, October 19, 2014, <http://cambridgeglobalist.org/2014/10/19/education-wealth-fails-demystifying-causes-terrorism/>.

⁵⁴ Krueger and Malečková, “Education, Poverty, and Terrorism.”

⁵⁵ Venhaus, *Why Youth Join al-Qaeda?*

⁵⁶ Mehmet Fevzi Dörtbudak, “The Intelligence Requirements of Psychological Operations in Counterterrorism” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2008).

⁵⁷ Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

⁵⁸ Halil Khashan, “Collective Palestinian Frustration and Suicide Bombings,” *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 6 (1995): 1049–1067.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

3. Individual Factors

According to Matthew Francis, “individual factors constantly emerge as unpredictable elements, which foil any attempt to predict who will resort to violence, and which prevents the attempts of so-called theories of radicalization to accurately account for violent behavior—other than in retrospect.”⁶⁰ Understanding the predispositions and reasons why individuals join and participate in terrorism is complex, and there are no easy answers. Factors, such as background, psychological mindset, discrimination, relative deprivation, are important factors that should be considered, but the influence of these can also vary from one individual to another. However, sociological and psychological approaches examining why people engage in social mobilization and violence can shed light on why individuals are open to radicalization.

The next sections examine several theories—relative deprivation, social movement theory, social distance theory, and psychological theories. These are reviewed with an eye to further unpacking radicalization at the individual and group levels and how social, economic, political factors, interacting with ideological and cultural factors, can lead to radicalized youth willing to commit violence.

a. Relative Deprivation Theory

When trying to explain why men rebel, Ted Robert Gurr found that mass discontent stemming from a gap between expected and achieved wellbeing results in political violence.⁶¹ Relative deprivation theory has its roots in the work of sociologist, Samuel A. Stouffer.⁶² The central concept posited by the theory of relative deprivation is that groups of people or individuals experience deprivation when their present circumstances (economic, political, social etc.) are “negatively compared” to the situation of others.⁶³ According to Gurr, “Relative deprivation refers to the tension that develops between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ of collective value satisfaction, that disposes men to

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970).

⁶² Simone, I. Flynn, “Social Movement Theory: Relative Deprivation Theory,” in *Sociology Reference Guide. Theories of Social Movements*, ed. Salem Press editors (Hackensack, NJ: Salem Press, 2011), 102.

⁶³ Ibid., 108.

violence.”⁶⁴ The literature on relative deprivation focusing on social exclusion and social movements is very extensive, well researched, and provides a convincing foundation for understanding youth disconnection.

Consolidated inequality theory is an extension of relative deprivation theory arguing that the blend of economic inequality and the issue of race give sharp rise to feelings of injustice, which requires an aggressive response.⁶⁵ The central premise of this theory is that the focus is on the inequality existing between the races, between the “haves” and “have nots,” wherein the proximity of the neighborhoods or communities matter. The one concern with this theory is that it contends that the outcome leads to a violent response. Not all inequality leads to violent outcomes, but this theory does point to the fact that inequality results in outcomes that are unanticipated, such as radicalization, because of the inequality—perceived or real. Despite this limitation, this theory is helpful in understanding what others perceive as inequality. The alignment of this theory to relative deprivation is important because provides a link to inequality as a result of a perceived lack of not having that can result in negative consequences such as alienation, frustration, crime, and other outcomes. It also ties into the work of James Klumpp and Mario Diani because it makes a distinction between “us” and “them,” which impacts social identity.

There is growing evidence to support the assertion that major factors, such as youth unemployment, underemployment, unequal access to “education and skills, poor governance, weak political participation, gender inequalities and socialization are some of the factors that lead to youth disconnection and can serve as motivators for radicalization.”⁶⁶ For Muslim youth in Western Europe, Tunisia, and elsewhere who have an education and cannot find employment, experience a sense of relative deprivation when they look at their peers, in and outside their immediate communities, who have less or equal education and who do not have employment and economic means.

⁶⁴ Gurr *Why Men Rebel*, 37.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶⁶ Lyndsay McLean Hilker and Erika Fraser, *Youth Exclusion, Violence, Conflict and fragile States* (Birmingham, UK: Governance and Social Development Resource Center, 2009), <http://www.gsdr.org/docs/open/con66.pdf>.

These Muslim youth feel relatively deprived, according to Gurr, because there is a “perceived discrepancy in their value expectations and value capabilities that lead to social discontent.”⁶⁷ This perceived gap creates frustration that can lead to aggression. The issue of frustration, anger, alienation, and other feelings of resentment ties in with psychological research in the subsequent section to further explain how disconnection leads to radicalization and ultimately violence. Similar parallels can be drawn concerning marginalized American youth.

Relative deprivation serves as a framework to explain individual-to-group radicalization. Additionally, relative deprivation holds that groups of people or individuals experience deprivation when their present circumstances (economic, political, social, education, cultural, etc.) are “negatively compared” to others.⁶⁸ Groups that are socially excluded or feel marginalized tend to have higher rates of radicalized individuals.⁶⁹ When one group of persons (or a community) has less than another group, such as money, access to education and other social resources, they may experience relative deprivation, which in turn might cause radicalization, especially in Muslim communities or groups.⁷⁰

When a group is experiencing isolation and relative deprivation, it is easy to unite around a singular focus. This way it has better control over its members and can exercise greater influence over those radicalized.⁷¹ The common enemy is those outside the group, and often violence is the only meaningful outcome that will affect the desired change. The element of empowerment and significance is important as noted by Kruglanski et al. in their research. They explain, “self-identification as a member of a

⁶⁷ Gurr *Why Men Rebel*, 37.

⁶⁸ Flynn, “Social Movement Theory,” 102.

⁶⁹ LaFree, Smarick, and Fishman, *Community-level Indicators*.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism: Current Multi-disciplinary Perspectives on Root Causes, the Role of Ideology, and Programs for Counter-radicalization and Disengagement* (Bryn Mawr, PA: Bryn Mawr College, 2010), <http://www.brynmawr.edu/psychology/documents/McCauleyMoskalenko.pdf>, 82–91.

social group larger than oneself can have a buffering effect against life's failures and increase one's sense of personal power and significance."⁷²

Such individual perception of group deprivation can bridge the analytic divide between individual and group level radicalization. The radicalizers are promoting a group identity that is supposedly deprived or denigrated, and the individual takes up that identity. Belonging to the group provides those that are disconnected and who experience relative deprivation a collective voice based on a common ideology. Radicalization starts with the individual, who may go through some processes as a result of a trigger, an event, circumstance that leads some to adopt extreme ideologies and others to engage in violence as an outcome.

b. Social Movement Theory

Social movement theory grew in part out of relative deprivation theory. Mario Diani views a social movement as "a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, bound by a shared collective identity."⁷³ Diani further notes, "This identity creates solidarity and makes the network internally homogeneous while functioning as a distinctive characteristic towards out-groups."⁷⁴ Here the clear goal is to draw a dividing line between "us" versus "them," much as Klumpp defined radicalization in the 1960s.⁷⁵ Social movement theory comes together around a three-pronged approach involving mobilizing resources, political opportunities, and framing to help explain when and how a movement arise.⁷⁶ From Western European and U.S. perspectives, this theory includes a

⁷² Arie W. Kruglanski et al., "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism," *Advances in Political Psychology* 35, Suppl. 1 (2014): 82. doi: 10.1111/pops.12163.

⁷³ Mario Diani, "The Concept of Social Movement," *The Sociological Review* 40, no. 1 (1992): 1–25.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ James F. Klumpp, "Challenge of Radical Rhetoric: Radicalization at Columbia," *Western Speech* 37, no. 3 (1973): 146–156.

⁷⁶ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, "Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes—Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald 1–20 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

grievance perspective as it relates to collective action and goes beyond relative deprivation.⁷⁷ Social movements, such as the Civil Rights in the 1960s, Occupy Wall Street, and the Arab Spring, include scores of individuals who experience relative deprivation or represent groups who are deprived and have taken collective action to make their grievances known. Relative deprivation is used in sociology wherein an individual or groups experience deprivation over areas such as money, political participation, employment, education, social institutions or status, and they create social movements to seek change and to engage in social action.⁷⁸ The idea of collective action through mobilization and ideology is central to this theory. Individuals, arguably, minority youth—especially African Americans and Muslims—do not just experience relative deprivation as an individual, but they experience it as part of a group. As a result individuals or groups are taking collective action, sometimes with or without violence. Collective action is the means through which anger and frustration are expressed.

c. *Social Distance Theory*

Social distance theory has to do with the social interactions and the “degree to which individuals are willing to accept and associate with those having different social characteristics.”⁷⁹ John Hipp notes that the higher the levels of diversity in a population from a racial/ethnicity standpoint, the less interaction occurs between individuals.⁸⁰ In addition, he found that the less people interact because of racial or ethnic differences, the higher the negative outcomes such as increased crime rates.⁸¹ Furthermore, social distance is prevalent between “haves” and “have-nots;” economic capability, wealth, intellect, social status all add to social distance between groups. Social distance theory is helpful in understanding the “intersecting parameters” of inequality and racial

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1567.

⁷⁸ Flynn, “Social Movement Theory,” 102.

⁷⁹ Peter M. Blau, “A Macrosociological Theory of Social Structure,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 83, no. 1 (1977): 26–54.

⁸⁰ John R. Hipp, “Income Inequality, Race and Place: Does the Distribution of Race and Class within Neighborhoods Affect Crime Rates?,” *Criminology* 45, no. 3(2007): 665–697.

⁸¹ Ibid.

heterogeneity and how it increases social distances and leads to disconnection.⁸² The wider the social distance between people, the less interaction, hence, the greater the disconnection.⁸³ Bringing this finding together with those of relative deprivation theory and social movement theory, those individuals who are socially distant and feel relatively deprived and disconnected are more likely to view their social environment in “us versus them” terms as well as to be frustrated enough to engage individually and collectively in illegal behaviors. By extension, it can be argued that the outcome of social distance theory is always negative. As such, the result of disconnection is radicalization that leads to frustration with violence and anger as possible outcomes.

d. Psychological Perspectives

Psychological studies of terrorism focus on understanding why people become radicalized and are recruited to join terrorist groups. According to Adam Moscoe, psychological studies are “useful insofar as they allow an interactionist perspective—integrating both internal and external influences both hereditary and environmental.”⁸⁴ In a study conducted with 60 former terrorists, psychologist John Horgan discovered that those more open to terrorist recruitment and radicalization tend to:

- (1) Feel angry, alienated, or disenfranchised.
- (2) Believe that their current political involvement does not give them the power to effect real change.
- (3) Identify with perceived victims of the social injustice they are fighting.
- (4) Feel the need to take action rather than just talking about the problem.
- (5) Believe that engaging in violence against the state is not immoral.
- (6) Have friends or family sympathetic to the cause.
- (7) Believe that joining a movement offers social and psychological rewards such as adventure, camaraderie, and a heightened sense of identity.⁸⁵

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Adam Moscoe, “Why Do People Join Terrorist Groups?” (master’s thesis, University of Ottawa, 2013).

⁸⁵ John Horgan, *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

These reasons are personal with deep-seated psychological underpinnings that should not be ignored. Horgan's research focuses on the individual and how he or she relates to recruitment and radicalization. Guilain Denoeux and Lynn Carter outline a somewhat similar typology of individual motivations, which are considered not to be mutually exclusive; rather, they shed light on why individuals join violent extreme terrorist groups:⁸⁶

- (1) Reasonably circumscribed, concrete and specific political, economic and social grievances;
- (2) Much broader ideological (especially religious) objectives;
- (3) The search for economic gain, or the pull exercised by prior involvement in illicit economic activities;
- (4) Personal factors (e.g., the desire to avenge a loved one, or to follow a friend or relative on the path of jihad).
- (5) Intimidation or coercion by peers or the community.⁸⁷

These classifications provide frameworks for understanding why individuals join terrorist organizations; however, not all motivations fall into these categories. Some of these motivations are very similar to those proposed by Horgan, such as ideology, personal factors, and coercion, and these help to explain and put into context the motives why individuals become involved in terrorism. Even though the 12 mechanisms of radicalization advanced by McCauley and Moskalkenko appear to be similar to those advanced by Horgan and also by Denoeux and Carter, McCauley and Moskalkenko go further and identify how the path to radicalization intensifies as it moves from one domain to the next.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Denoeux and Carter, *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 63.

⁸⁸ The 12 mechanisms identified by McCauley and Moskalkenko's occur at three levels or domains. At the individual level, the following five mechanisms are identified as important: personal victimization, political grievance), joining a radical group (the slippery slope), joining a radical group (the power of love), and extreme shift in like-minded groups. At the group level, the mechanisms include: extreme cohesion under isolation and threat, competition for the same base of support, competition with state power (condensation), and within group competition (also known as fissioning). At the mass level the mechanisms leading to radicalization include jiu-jitsu politics, hate, and martyrdom. McCauley and Moskalkenko, "Individual and Group Mechanisms," 418.

e. Other Approaches

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Laura Gross empirically examined the “behavioral manifestations of the radicalization process in 117 jihadi terrorists.” In their study, they focused on and reviewed six areas of the radicalization process: (1) the adoption of a legalistic interpretation of Islam, (2) coming to trust only a select and ideologically rigid group of religious authorities, (3) viewing the West and Islam as irreconcilably opposed, (4) manifesting a low tolerance for perceived religious deviance, (5) attempting to impose religious beliefs on others, and (6) the expression of radical political views.⁸⁹ These form a set of behavioral factors they considered indicators of radicalization.

Marc Sageman states that terrorists from Western countries, who are primarily youth seeking fame and thrills, are radicalized in the West, not the Middle East.⁹⁰ Even though there is no terrorist profile, Sageman’s research has found that terrorists appear to be second and third generation immigrants, are often from the Muslim diaspora, share a common identity, are radicalized in small groups, and are often friends and relatives.⁹¹

Furthermore, Sageman identified a four-stage process of radicalization through which a Muslim youth goes.⁹² The first stage is a sense of “moral outrage,” followed by a stage that “interprets the outrage in a specific way,” which in the mind of the individual, is an act challenging Islam.⁹³ Stage three has an ideological appeal and “resonates with the individual’s personal experience,” and it is regarded as part of a larger war. The fourth stage is one in which individuals are essentially “mobilized (recruited) via networks” either “online or face-to-face.”⁹⁴ Even though this framework does not

⁸⁹ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Laura Grossman, *Homegrown Terrorists in the U.S. and UK: An Empirical Examination of the Radicalization Process* (Washington, DC: FDD Center for Terrorism Research, 2009), http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/HomegrownTerrorists_USandUK.pdf.

⁹⁰ Marc Sageman, “A Strategy for Fighting International Islamist Terrorists,” *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618, no. 223 (2008): 1–8, http://www.artisresearch.com/articles/Sageman_Strategy_for_Fighting.pdf.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 618.

specifically address the issue of violence as an outcome, it lays out the process for radicalization.

Emotions, such as frustration, anger, rage, and alienation, are some of the factors that play into any and all of these stages, and they serve as building blocks as the individual moves from one stage to the other. Moral outrages of perceived injustices against Muslims, such as the Iraq war, the public burning of the Quran, the caricature of the Prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper, the Charlie Hebdo mockery in Paris, etc., are powerful igniters of moral outrage, and they conform to the indicators developed by Gartenstein-Ross and Gross as well as Sageman.

In addition, the work of Zachary Shore is very insightful in explaining why Europe's Muslim youth are disconnected and how the continent is serving as the breeding ground and the supplier of terrorists with America as the primary target.⁹⁵ Shore highlights the emotional conflicts Muslims in Europe experience in the pursuit integrate in mainstream society while abhorring the values the West represents.⁹⁶ These conflict and themes are resonating factors that serve as igniters to radicalization. Furthermore, Marc Sageman's definition is particularly useful because it highlights key indicators "along the entire trajectory of radicalization that can lead an individual to violence."⁹⁷ The path to radicalization is not a passive experience because the key indicators of transformation in the person's life are probably evident and visible to others around them, such as family, friends, and the community in which they live. Individuals who are radicalized to terrorism do so for varying and different reasons. Religion or being a devout follower of Islam is not necessarily the only reasons.

D. THE ARGUMENT: DISCONNECTION AS CAUSE

Youth are at the critical stage in which they are making the transition to adulthood. They are facing choices, including their identity, independence, career

⁹⁵ Zachary Shore, *Breeding Bin Ladens: America, Islam and the Future of Europe* (Baltimore, MD: John's Hopkins University Press, 2006).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 16.

opportunities, and they charting the path that will determine their future. Various research studies show that youth who views violence on the internet have a greater likelihood of similar aggressive and violent behavior.⁹⁸ Violence is an important outcome of terrorism, and youth are particularly susceptible to it. The focus to this age group is also important because youth in it will or will not become the future entrepreneurs, lawyers, doctors, teachers, engineers, etc., and they will become the economic engine of the next generation. During this time, youth are highly susceptible to the media representations of violence. It is for these and other reasons the focus is on this age group, and it is important to study them, especially since they have the highest rate of disconnection in the United States.

Disconnected youth are considered youth without any hope of getting an education or finding a job as a result of the socioeconomic conditions that impede their progress or ability to be productive and contribute to society. This study defines youth disconnection as youth ages 16 to 24 who are not involved in education or employment because of the lack of access and opportunity due to economic, political, social, and religious barriers. Youth are disconnected from work, education, employment, and economic viability, and they may turn into “frustrated achievers,” which may leave them vulnerable and ripe to radicalization to terrorist ideology.⁹⁹ Therefore, socioeconomic conditions, such as poverty, inequality, education, employment, income, and political and other factors associated with disconnected youth are therefore hypothesized to be important root causes of radicalization.

⁹⁸ Soledad Liliana Escobar-Chaves and Craig A. Anderson, “Media and Risky Behaviors,” *The Future of Children* 18, no. 1 (2008): 147–180;

Craig A. Anderson, Leonard Berkowitz, Edward Donnerstein, L. Rowell Huesmann, James D. Johnson, Daniel Linz, Neil M. Malamuth, and Ellen Wartella, “The Influence of Media Violence on Youth,” *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 4, no. 3 (2003): 81–110.

Eugene V. Beresin, “The Impact of Media Violence on Children and Adolescents: Opportunities for Clinical Interventions,” American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, accessed October 15, 2016, http://www.aacap.org/aacap/medical_students_and_residents/mentorship_matters/developmentor/the_impact_of_media_violence_on_children_and_adolescents_opportunities_for_clinical_interventions.aspx.

⁹⁹ Carol Graham, and Stefano Pettinato, “Frustrated Achievers: Winners, Losers and Subjective Well-being in New Market Economies,” *Journal of Development Studies* 38, no. 4 (2002): 100–140.

As noted earlier, this study seeks to understand the relationship, if any, between disconnection as a result of social, economic, political, and other factors leading to radicalization with violence as an outcome. Radicalization concerns disconnected youth with no outlet for redress, who feel marginalized with no voice or forum for being heard, with little hope of their circumstances changing.

E. CONCLUSION

The root causes of radicalization can be divided into two major schools of thought, as noted above. One group attributes radicalization to unemployment, lack of education, lack of upward mobility, and to social and economic factors, while the other attributes it to religion, ideology, and culture.¹⁰⁰ However, while both schools of thought are valid, they do not bring us any closer to an understanding of how to bridge the gap.¹⁰¹ It is necessary to understand the interplay between ideology and socioeconomic factors and how they influence each other. Ömer Taşpınar posits that the radicalization occurs when all multiple factors such as social, cultural, economic, political, and psychological factors converge.¹⁰² Here the concept of relative deprivation is helpful to explain when aspirations, expectations, and hope remain unfulfilled leading to frustration and joining an extremist group.¹⁰³

The potential for ideological radicalization, humiliation, and frustration, leading to ideological radicalization, increases when high hopes and expectations, aspirations, and the promise of upward mobility go unfulfilled in people, particularly youth.¹⁰⁴ It is for these reasons that socioeconomic circumstances and lack of employment and education for youth require serious consideration. Education and employment go hand in hand, and when one (or both) is missing, it leads to a sense disenfranchisement resulting in humiliation, anger, and frustration.

¹⁰⁰ Ömer Taşpınar, "The Problem with Radicalism," *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs* [online], no. 19 (Fall 2015), <https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/the-problem-with-radicalism/>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Even though studies in the literature point out that lack of education and poverty have a marginal effect on radicalization, this chapter suggests that poverty and lack of education should not be ignored. Both educated and uneducated youth from wealthy or poor families may be equally predisposed to radicalization and violence. Psychological factors, such as marginalization, alienation, fear, anger, and frustration, all creates the identity of frustrated achievers with little hope of a future.

III. YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN THE UNITED STATES

A growing number of young people haven't encountered the American Dream. They are the disconnected youth—the more than six million 16-to-24-year-olds neither participating in the workforce nor enrolled in school. Many are high school dropouts, foster youth, and young people involved in the justice system—those who have fallen off, who were never put on a good path, and too many of whom have been forgotten in the various debates around education or employment.

Chelsea Clinton, August 19, 2013

A. INTRODUCTION

To assess whether youth disconnection has an impact on radicalization, the concept must be defined and measured. Youth disconnection in the United States is a serious problem with generational consequences, as this chapter shows. Youth disconnection has significant impacts on social, economic, political, mental health and other areas that cost taxpayers billions every year. This chapter provides an overview of the definitional differences associated with youth disconnection, followed by a review of the various factors associated with this issue. In addition, this chapter includes a national U.S. statistical profile followed by deeper exploration into what the youth disconnection profile looks like in some metropolitan areas in the United States. This chapter also shows the education participation level and dropout rates that serve as important indicators of youth participation. Additionally, this chapter examines youth unemployment, underemployment, and employment to provide meaning and to help frame the issue. Finally, this chapter also sets the foundation for the following chapter on radicalization.

B. MEANING OF YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Depending on its definition, the estimates of the number of disconnected youth vary from one study to the next. The way data are collected, analyzed, and reported are all contributing to factors such differences. The number of disconnected youth ranges

from 5 million to 6.7 million, depending on the estimates and study being used.¹⁰⁵ Definitional differences explain why the number of impacted youth varies for each study. Besides youth not in school and not employed, Youth.gov also includes youth “who are homeless, in foster care, and incarcerated in the juvenile justice system.”¹⁰⁶ A 2009 Child Trends study only includes “youth who are not in school and not employed.”¹⁰⁷ A 2012 Social Science Research Council study estimated that about “5.5 million youth ages 16 to 24” are not in school and not employed.¹⁰⁸ In a study conducted by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), disconnected youth is even more narrowly defined to include “youth who are not working and not in school for a longer period of time (versus at a point in time, or for instance, over a six-month period).”¹⁰⁹ Some studies include youth who are in juvenile facilities whereas other do not. As a result, methodological differences ultimately impact the number of disconnected youth being reported.¹¹⁰

The previous discussion points out the challenges of trying to define youth disconnection. Youth disconnection evolves over time and impacts social, economic,

¹⁰⁵ Youth.gov, a U.S. website on youth programs, defines disconnection as young people between the ages 14 to 24, “who are homeless, in foster care, in the juvenile system, not enrolled in education or employed.” Using this definition, it is estimated there are approximately 6.7 million youth who display one or more of the at-risk factors contained in this definition, “Reconnecting Youth,” accessed November 5, 2016, <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/reconnecting-youth>.

A study by Child Trends defines disconnection as “young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not in school or in the workforce” estimated that number to be about 5 million youth in 2001. The Youth.gov definition casts a wider net in their youth age bracket that includes ages 14 to 24, whereas the Child Trends uses a narrower definition and a more commonly accepted age bracket of 16 to 24 (that typically combines ages 16 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years).

Elizabeth C. Hair, Kristin A. Moore, Thomson J. Ling, Cameron McPhee-Baker, and Brett V. Brown, *Youth Who are ‘Disconnected’ and Those Who Then Reconnect: Assessing the Influence of Family* (Publication No. 2009–37) (Bethesda, MD: Child Trends, 2009), <http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/8.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ “Reconnecting Youth,” accessed November 5, 2016, <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/reconnecting-youth>.

¹⁰⁷ Hair et al., *Youth Who are ‘Disconnected.’*

¹⁰⁸ Sarah Burd-Sharps and Kristen Lewis, *One in Seven: Ranking Youth Disconnection in the 25 Largest Metro Areas* (Brooklyn, NY: Measure of America Social Sciences Research Council, 2012), http://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/moa/MOA-One_in_Seven09-14.pdf, 6.

¹⁰⁹ Adrienne L. Fernandes-Alcantara, *Disconnected Youth: A Look at 16 to 24 Year Olds Who Are Not Working or in School* (CRS Report No. R40535) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2015), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40535.pdf>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

political, cultural, and environmental dimensions. A similar point has been made in the literature review about radicalization as a process that occurs over time and is linked to social, political, economic, and cultural environments. In both instances, youth, are experiencing perceived political and economic marginalization, which could lead to what Klumpp terms a “confrontation” between a perceived “us” and “them” with violence as a real outcome.¹¹¹ Among all these definitions, the two most common threads that are repeatedly associated with youth disconnection includes nonparticipation in education and unemployment. This thesis seeks to shed light on the factors and characteristics associated with youth disconnection and to determine the extent to which these lead to radicalization.

C. CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN THE UNITED STATES

The narrative of youth disconnection presented above establishes the foundational framework, providing an understanding of the impact disconnected youth can have on society. If the prospects of educational and employment opportunities are low and marginal, it is argued that other, more dangerous opportunities and actors exist and are waiting to “take advantage of our disillusioned youth, including ISIL [The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant].”¹¹² If disconnected youth are not engaged and connected, and they are disillusioned and marginalized, they may become easy targets for radicalization.

Kristen Lewis and Sarah Burd-Sharps identified six characteristics strongly associated with disconnected neighborhoods, including “high adult unemployment, low adult educational attainment, low human-development levels, high levels of poverty, and a high degree of residential segregation by race and ethnicity.”¹¹³ These factors are very similar to those highlighted in Table 1, which support and strengthen the idea that youth

¹¹¹ Klumpp, “Challenge of Radical Rhetoric.”

¹¹² Jon-Christopher Bua, “For African-American and Muslim-American Youth Is Violence the Only Answer?,” *The Huffington Post*, August 6, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/jonchristopher-bua/youth-unemployment-engagement_b_7533948.html.

¹¹³ Kristen Lewis and Sarah Burd-Sharps, “The Dismal Numbers behind Disconnected Youth,” *The Atlantic*, November 21, 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/11/the-dismal-numbers-behind-disconnected-youth/430404/>.

disconnection does not occur in a vacuum. Youth disconnection is a process that does not surface overnight; it can be measured over a sustained period.

Relative deprivation provides an important foundational framework in understanding how individuals experience deprivation when their present circumstances (economic, political, social, education, cultural, etc.) do not measure up to those of their peers.¹¹⁴ The profile offered above is important because it represents the real lives of youth, “and the full force of fear, anxiety, prejudice, and even hopelessness.”¹¹⁵ Disconnected minority youth who are socially excluded or feel marginalized look for other ways of self-expression, and violence cannot be discounted as an outcome. The Baltimore riots of 2015 serve as a reminder of this phenomenon. During the riots, the inner-city youth, who were disconnected and experienced relative deprivation from economic, education, political and social participation expressed their frustration through rioting and violence. When one group of individuals or community has less of something, such as money, access to education and other social resources, than those in another group they may experience relative deprivation that may give rise to violence.

D. FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DISCONNECTION

Family poverty level, family structure, receipt of welfare, parental education, parental unemployment, age, race/ethnicity, the existence of older siblings, and gender are all factors associated with disconnection.¹¹⁶ Some of these factors, such as family poverty, parental education and unemployment, are more prevalent than others in the prediction of disconnection.¹¹⁷ In a study by the Pohad Family Foundation, the researcher found similar factors, including poverty, racial disparity, structural changes in the job market and fragmentation of public support services for youth.¹¹⁸ Using data spanning a

¹¹⁴ Flynn, “Social Movement Theory,” 102.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Hair et al., *Youth Who are ‘Disconnected.’*

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Adapted from Pohad Family Foundation, *2015 Youth Advancement Overview* (Minneapolis, MN: Pohad Family Foundation, 2015), <http://www.pohladfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/YouthAdvancementOverview2015.compressed.pdf>.

period of 21 years, a Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) found that “poverty is an important predictor of educational attainment even after controlling for background factors.”¹¹⁹ Table 1, from the Pohad study, lists a range of factors across four domains to help explain youth delinquency and to provide a context for understanding how they impact disconnection.¹²⁰

Table 1. Risk Factors Associated with Delinquency by Domain¹²¹

Risk Factors	Domain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early antisocial behavior and emotional factors such as low behavioral inhibitions • Poor cognitive development • Hyperactivity 	Individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate or inappropriate child rearing practices, • Home discord • Maltreatment and abuse • Large family size • Parental antisocial history • Poverty • Exposure to repeated family violence • Divorce • Parental psychopathology • Teenage parenthood • A high level of parent-child conflict • A low level of positive parental involvement 	Family

Andrew Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada, Nathan Pond, Mykhaylo Trub'sky, Neeta Fogg, and Sheila Palma, *Left Behind in the Labor Market: Labor Market Problems of the Nation's Out-of-School, Young Adult Populations* (Boston: Northeastern University, 2003), <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED475681.pdf>.

In the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, researchers found that the relationship between poverty and education diminishes when one “control[s] for other variables such as parental education, IQ and family structure.” Fernandes-Alcantara, *Disconnected Youth*.

¹¹⁹ Robert H. Haveman, Barbara L. Wolfe, and Kathryn Wilson, *Childhood Poverty and Adolescent Schooling and Fertility Outcomes: Reduced-Form and Structural Estimates* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998).

¹²⁰ “Risk and Protective Factors,” accessed November 5, 2016, <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/juvenile-justice/risk-and-protective-factors>.

¹²¹ Source: Pohad Family Foundation, *2015 Youth Advancement Overview*.

Risk Factors	Domain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending time with peers who engage in delinquent or risky behavior • Gang involvement • Less exposure to positive social opportunities because of bullying and rejection 	Peer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor academic performance • Enrollment in schools that are unsafe and fail to address the academic and social and emotional needs of children and youth • Low commitment to school • Low educational aspirations • Poor motivation • Living in an impoverished neighborhood • Social disorganization in the community in which the youth lives • High crime neighborhoods 	School/ Community

Youth disconnection occurs at various levels and can include a number of factors associated with the dimensions, listed in Table 1. At-risk factors identified at the individual domain can serve as early warning signs, as it relates to cognitive development and early anti-social warning signs, to parents and family members. Family domain factors also contribute to youth disconnection in similar ways. Poverty, large family size, home discord, the low level of parental involvement, and exposure to family violence are all factors that play some part in the lack of youth development, which can lead to youth disconnection resulting in radicalization. Even though poverty is not the single most important driver of disconnection, if and when it is combined with some of the other factors included above, its relevance and impact cannot be ignored.

The at-risk factors related to peers (especially), gang involvement, and bullying should be confronted from a community/school/family perspective by teaching youth how to reject these drivers of negative social behaviors. Youth seek a common identity and the influences of peers are important, especially that of peers that live in the same neighborhood. This linkage has been established and discussed in the previous chapter. At-risk factors associated with the school and community domain, such as living in high crime neighborhoods, low commitment to school, poor academic performance, and youth living in underserved neighborhoods, further add to youth marginalization. The higher

the likelihood of multiple at-risk factors, the higher the likelihood of negative behavior, including delinquency.¹²² As viewed through the prism of these at-risk factors, disconnection impacts youth as individuals and groups, and it has implications for cities, counties, metropolitan areas, states, and the federal government. Furthermore, education is vital to reducing some of the youth at-risk factors discussed above and is explored in the following section.

E. EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES FOR YOUTH AGES 16–24

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) asserts that “status dropout” specifically refers to “16 to 24 year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school credential (diploma or equivalency diploma such as General Education Development (GED) certificate).”¹²³ Additionally, it refers to the number of “individuals who did not complete high school and can serve as an indicator of youth disconnection.”¹²⁴ The status dropout rate dropped to seven percent from 12 percent for the timeframe 1990 to 2013, and is the lowest it has ever been.¹²⁵ Despite this decline, status dropout continues to impact a large number of U.S. youth who are not involved in education; minority youth are disproportionately impacted.

In a study by Erickson and Phillips, discussed in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, reveals that youth who are religious are “more likely to complete high school and enroll in college even when controlling for other individual and interpersonal factors that affect educational attainment.”¹²⁶ The reason for this success has little to do with religion and more to do with relationships, mentoring, and social interactions they

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2015* (NCES 2015–144) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2015), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015144.pdf>.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Lance D. Erickson and James W. Phillip, “The Effect of Religious-Based Mentoring on Educational Attainment: More than Just a Spiritual High?,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, no. 3 (2012): 568–587.

experience.¹²⁷ The study by Erickson and Phillips does not offer a breakdown by type of religion (Catholic, Protestant, Islam, etc.) to see if there are significant differences.

F. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, UNDEREMPLOYMENT, AND EMPLOYMENT

Youth employment among ages 16 to 24 is an important indicator of engagement, economic contribution and vitality among this age group. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistic (BLS), employment is defined as “any paid work by anyone over 16 years old.”¹²⁸ Unemployed youth are defined by the BLS as those who are “jobless, available for work, and actively looking for jobs.”¹²⁹ In the United States, a large proportion of youth are either not employed or underemployed, such as those tasked with the responsibility to care for elderly or ailing parents, those who are teen parents taking care of children alone, or those not actively looking for employment or not enrolled in education. This is a positive reason for being counted as unemployed and in many cases provides a path to success for this youth demographic.

Youth employment matters because it brings economic independence and a sense of stability and identity into the lives of youth. When employed, they continue to learn valuable skills and training that can be carried into adulthood, which is one of the important societal anchors that will allow them to provide for themselves and their families. Youth who are employed are more engaged in the communities where they reside and work, and that engagement provides for opportunities to feel less disconnected and more a part of a community. When youth are connected to their communities, there is less of an impact on the criminal justice system and potentially reduces future dependency on public welfare and assistance. Moreover, youth who are employed are better positioned to improve their education, and this reduces youth dropout rates.¹³⁰ From an economic standpoint, youth employment opens doors to economic mobility and

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics, “College Enrollment and Work Activity of High School Graduates,” accessed November 5, 2016, http://www.bls.gov/schedule/archives/all_nr.htm#HSGEC.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Marc Schindler, “Why Youth Employment Matters,” Justice Policy Institute, October 6, 2014, <http://www.justicepolicy.org/news/8248>.

progress, allowing youth to achieve what is often referred to as the American Dream. It is a fact that educational attainment among youth leads to higher income.¹³¹

1. The Youth Unemployment Picture

Youth unemployment in the United States is a national concern, and it limits economic opportunity and social mobility. It is not just a U.S. problem; it is a global problem with far reaching consequences. A 2007 United Nations Commission for Social Development Report notes long-term effects of unemployment among some youth, such as low self-esteem and frustration, make them more vulnerable to increase disease, drug and crime use, and, this leads to further marginalization and social exclusion, thus further perpetuating poverty cycle.¹³² The concern and vulnerabilities are real and impacts unemployed youth worldwide.

In a study by the Center for American Progress, a similar sentiment and theme were expressed in that today's "youth ages 16 to 24 face some of the worst employment prospects in recent history."¹³³ The unemployment rate in the United States has "increased to a rate of 16.2 percent for all youth ages 16 to 24 in 2013."¹³⁴ According to the BLS, the "youth unemployment rates for all races remained historically high with African-American youth still experiencing the highest rate at 29.7 percent and Asian youth, the lowest at 9.9 percent."¹³⁵ African American youth, followed by Hispanic youth, are disproportionately more impacted or displaced economically than any other

¹³¹ Steven Strauss, "The Connection between Education, Income, Inequality, and Unemployment," *The Huffington Post* [blog], last modified January 2, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steven-strauss/the-connection-between-ed_b_1066401.html.

¹³² United Nations, Commission for Social Development, *Youth Employment: Impact, Challenges and Opportunities for Social Development* (New York: United Nations, 2007), <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/csocd45emergingissues.pdf>.

¹³³ Sarah Ayres Steinberg, "The High Cost of Youth Unemployment," Center for American Progress, April 5, 2013, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/labor/report/2013/04/05/59428/the-high-cost-of-youth-unemployment>.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

groups.¹³⁶ The high rate of youth unemployment in the U.S requires urgent attention given its impact when viewed from social, economic, and political perspectives.

Youth unemployment brings hidden costs, such as uncollected taxes, and increases safety net expenditures, passing the economic burden on to future generations.¹³⁷ It also limits economic mobility, limits potential for future earnings, and has been attributed to youth disconnection that in some way influences radicalization.¹³⁸ High youth unemployment among minority groups has economic consequences that are generational, “and failing to employ young people today will result in lost earnings, greater costs, and slower economic growth tomorrow.”¹³⁹

Even though it is concerning that disconnection manifests as a societal issue among youth, this study does not find that it leads to radicalization. The significant rate of youth unemployment remains a global concern, although this research focuses on the United States. The impacts on society are significant, requiring new and innovative approaches to create lasting changes. The issue of youth unemployment should not be viewed in a vacuum; it should be closely tied to education and other youth and social development programs.

2. Youth Underemployment

Underemployment can be viewed as an individual’s inability to work full-time or find regular employment either with respect to their abilities or the fact that the employment they are qualified to work does not address with the economic challenges they face. In essence, the person is not working within an economic capacity to allow

¹³⁶ “Spotlight on Youth,” International Labor Organization, accessed October 15, 2016, <http://www.ilo.org/washington/ilo-and-the-united-states/spot-light-on-the-us-labor-market/spot-light-on-us-youth/lang--en/index.htm>.

¹³⁷ “Youth Unemployment,” Opportunity Nation, accessed November 5, 2016, <https://opportunitynation.org/youth-unemployment/>.

¹³⁸ Howard Koplowitz, “Islamic Extremism in Europe: Is High Youth Unemployment to Blame?,” *IBT News*, January 1, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/islamic-extremism-europe-high-youth-unemployment-blame-1783834>.

¹³⁹ Steinberg, “The High Cost of Youth Unemployment.”

them to improve their situation.¹⁴⁰ According to the BLS, no official government statistics captures the total number of youth who may be considered as underemployed. Even if many or most underemployed youth could be identified, it would still be difficult to quantify the loss to the economy of such underemployment.¹⁴¹ Despite this challenge and though it is largely ignored, underemployment is as big an issue as unemployment.¹⁴² In October 2014, the overall underemployment rate in the United States was at 11.5 percent, representing 17.7 million individuals.¹⁴³ Even though the data is not broken out by race, age, and gender, doubtlessly, youth are represented in these numbers, and it serves as a valuable indicator of disconnection that should be considered. The BLS does not track “discouraged workers,” who are defined as those who want to work, have looked for work, and are available for work, but have given up on finding work.¹⁴⁴ Those individuals “who work full-time but live below the poverty level are also considered underemployed.”¹⁴⁵

The influences of underemployment and unemployment are the same: they both serve as drivers for higher poverty levels. Underemployment reduces the disposable income of families and places a drain on national economic and employment growth.¹⁴⁶ Here, relative deprivation is useful in understanding outcomes. When youth expect to participate in education and employment yet they are unable to find meaningful work, it leads to frustration and anger that could turn into aggression and violence because of an unmet expectation. Youth, who are unable to find meaningful employment and are unable to develop skills and competencies, have few options for meaningful futures and careers.

¹⁴⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Frequently asked Questions: Is there a Measure of Under Employment?,” last modified October 8, 2015, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/faq.htm#Ques11>.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Mike Cassidy, “Don’t Forget the Kinda Unemployed,” *U.S. News and World Report*, November 12, 2014, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/economic-intelligence/2014/11/12/the-unemployment-rate-leaves-the-underemployed-invisible>.

¹⁴⁴ Kimberly Amadeo, “What Is Underemployment? It’s Causes, Effects and the Current Rate: Overeducated and Underemployed: Thank You, Recession,” *The Balance*, August 5, 2016, <https://www.thebalance.com/underemployment-definition-causes-effects-rate-3305519>.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

According to a Gallup Poll survey, “underemployment has a greater effect on the life satisfaction for the educated than the less educated.”¹⁴⁷ Underemployment can also give rise to “frustrated achievers” because it creates a gap between youth’s ability work commensurate with their education and the actual condition they find themselves leading to relative deprivation.

3. Youth Employment

Data from the 2009 Child Trends study cited earlier also indicates “that as of October 2014, about 49 percent of all youth between the ages 16 to 24 were employed,” regardless of the type of work.¹⁴⁸ The study asserts, “Youth enrolled in high school experience, an employment rate of 18 percent, while youth in college had a rate of 46 percent.”¹⁴⁹ In contrast, youth not enrolled in high school or college “experienced an employment rate of 68 percent,” which means 32 percent were unemployed and not in school.¹⁵⁰

In the United States, employment for youth ages 16 to 24 among all racial groups, which had been relatively consistent, began to decline in 2007 and in 2008, and it has since improved incrementally with the 2014 rate at 49 percent.¹⁵¹ Males are more likely to be employed but not attending school when compared to females (72.2 percent and 63.6 percent, respectively.)¹⁵² The labor force participation rate for first-generation immigrants is higher than it is for second-generation immigrants.¹⁵³ Also, the overall nonimmigrant youth has a 49 percent labor force participation rate, which, when combined the rate for both first- and second-generation immigrant youth, is still

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Child Trends, *Youth Employment: Indicators on Children and Youth* (Bethesda, MD: Child Trends, 2015), <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=youth-employment>.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Maria E. Enchautegui, *Immigrant Youth Outcomes Patterns by Generation and Race and Ethnicity* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2014), <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/immigrant-youth-outcomes-patterns-generation-and-race-and-ethnicity>.

higher.¹⁵⁴ Immigrant youth are faced with challenges when trying to assimilate into the dominant culture, and this could lead to inequalities and disconnection and frustration. Youth, especially first generation youth, face barriers such as language, acculturation, assimilation, and social norms, as well as a host of economic and political barriers.

Youth ages 16 to 24 years have lower levels of employment participation as compared to those youth who have some college education or have already graduated with a degree.¹⁵⁵ According to the Urban Institute, in 2014,

The employment rate for youth with a college degree was 85 percent, compared to youth with some college or an associate degree employed at a rate of 78 percent, and lastly when compared to a rate of 68 percent for youth with no college education at all.¹⁵⁶

These statistics reveal that attaining a college degree, or at least attending some college, results in higher employment rates as compared to employment rates of youth with no college; whereas, those with less college education has lower employment rates. This data also reveals that youth with no college and higher unemployment tend to be non-white.

G. YOUTH DISCONNECTION FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The issue of youth disconnection, is not just a U.S. problem. Europe is also grappling with the same challenge and has not fared any better in finding meaningful solutions to the problem. The United States, followed by the United Kingdom (U.K.), are the two western countries with the highest rates of global disconnection, followed by Austria and Canada (as indicated in Table 2). These high rates of disconnected youth pose significant challenges because more and more youth are becoming marginalized, and they are increasingly finding other ways to express their frustration is not engaged in employment or education.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

Table 2. Youth Disconnection in the United States, Canada, and Select European Countries¹⁵⁷

Country	Disconnection Rate %
Unites States	13.8
United Kingdom	13.4
Austria	11.4
Canada	10.5
Germany	9.5
Norway	9.2
Finland	8.6
Switzerland	6.8
Denmark	5.7
Netherlands	4.1

A study by Hans Dietrich reveals youth unemployment for those individuals younger than 25 years of age was increased after 2012, due in part to the European economic crisis, while the adult employment rate increased during the same timeframe.¹⁵⁸ A study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) found that for youth ages 15–24 years old, unemployment for the period ending in 2009 was about 19 percent, impacting nearly 15 million youth.¹⁵⁹ In addition, the

¹⁵⁷ Adapted from Richard Florida, “The Tragic Geography of Disconnected Youth,” *The Atlantic*, September 14, 2012, <http://www.citylab.com/work/2012/09/metros-most-disconnected-young-people/3269/>.

¹⁵⁸ Hans Dietrich, *Youth Unemployment in Europe. Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Findings* (Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012), http://fesbp.hu/common/pdf/ipa_hans_dietrich_2012_july.pdf.

¹⁵⁹ The Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) was established in 1948 to run the U.S.-financed Marshall Plan for reconstruction of a continent ravaged by war. By making individual governments recognize the interdependence of their economies, it paved the way for a new era of cooperation that was to change the face of Europe. Encouraged by its success and the prospect of carrying its work forward on a global stage, Canada and the United States joined OEEC members in signing the new OECD Convention on 14 December 1960. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was officially born on 30 September 1961, when the Convention entered into force. Stefano Scarpetta, Anne Sonnet and Thomas Manfredi, *Rising Youth Unemployment during The Crisis: How to Prevent Negative Long-term Consequences on a Generation?* (OECD Social, Employment and Migration Papers, No. 106) (Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2010), <http://www.oecd.org/employment/youthforum/44986030.pdf>.

OECD study found that in Italy and France, the youth unemployment rate was about 25 percent, while more than 40 percent of youth is without jobs.¹⁶⁰

Youth who are engaged and connected have higher self-esteem, feel less anxious, have a positive outlook, and are involved in a meaningful activity.¹⁶¹ They are also less apathetic, more optimistic, and learn and develop healthy practices and habits that they can carry into adulthood.¹⁶² The identities of youth who are engaged in employment and education are formed out of a healthy self-respect and an innate sense of responsibility.¹⁶³

Disconnected youth remain at increased odds with themselves and their reason for being. As a result, they often start searching for meaning and relevance in other areas not conducive to norms and expectations of society. Does the fact that these youth feel disconnected and marginalized result in an increased risk of becoming radicalized to terrorism? Raul Caruso and Evelina Gavrilova provided expert testimony to the 2012 Global Terrorism Index.¹⁶⁴ Based on their research looking at the nexus between youth unemployment and terrorism, they argue that

The relationship between youth unemployment and political violence contributes to solve the dilemma on the relationship between education and terrorism. In fact, the level of education influences the sense of frustration and grievances perceived by younger individuals. Put differently, educated individuals in the presence of unfavorable economic landscape perceive that their expectations on employment outcomes are not likely to take shape. In other words, a superior education magnifies the grievance mechanism. The Arab Spring seems to be a fundamental example in this respect.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Scarpetta, Sonnet, and Manfredi, *Rising Youth Unemployment*, 4.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Institute for Economics and Peace, *2012 Global Terrorism Index* (New York: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2012), <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2012-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report.pdf>, 46; Raul Caruso and Evelina Gavrilova, "Youth Unemployment, Terrorism and Political Violence, Evidence from the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict," *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy* 18, no. 2 (2012): 37–49.

¹⁶⁵ Caruso and Evelina Gavrilova, "Youth Unemployment," 46.

Educated youth who do not have employment prospects and who constantly face economic barriers will eventually become dissatisfied and make their frustration known in a tangible way. Youth who are poor, unemployed, uneducated, and disconnected may be radicalized for different reasons than youth who are educated. In the end, the same conclusion can be assumed: youth who are educated or uneducated, and regardless of their employment status, if they feel disconnected for personal, political, religious, social and to a lesser extent economic reasons, may can become radicalized, leading to them to commit acts of terrorism. This notion ties in closely to Gurr's definition of relative deprivation because the gap between "ought" and "is" appears to be so wide it may ultimately lead to violence.¹⁶⁶ The work of Horgan is also relevant to relative deprivation especially regarding youth who are without education, unemployed or underemployed, or alternatively, youth with education but no employment prospects. It can all lead to anger, frustration and marginalization, especially when they perceive that the current economic and political environments have left them behind.¹⁶⁷ When there is no outlet for a grievance, violence may not just a threat but reality.

H. MUSLIM YOUTH AND DISCONNECTION

The key challenges related to youth disconnection as outlined in Table 2 is very similar to that of youth in Europe and in the United States. The residual effects of lack of youth employment, such as concern for drug use, violence, and extremism, are some of the social impacts. As previously discussed, the lack of economic and political participation are other concerns, and they increase feelings of deprivation in many forms, such as economic inequality, political participation, which leads to further marginalization.

The reasons why youth become disconnected, reasons such as poverty, conflicts and wars, and gender, are real concerns that should be addressed as it relates to Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries. A 2015 report by the OIC lists

¹⁶⁶ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*.

¹⁶⁷ Horgan, *Leaving Terrorism Behind*.

some of the key challenges facing Muslim youth in specific countries as it relates to youth disconnection (see Figure 1).¹⁶⁸

Figure 1. Challenges of Youth from OIC Perspective¹⁶⁹

Challenges of Youth from OIC Perspective
First Islamic Conference of Youth Ministers, held in Jeddah during 1–2 May 2007, identifies the following challenges faced by the youth in the OIC countries:
A. In the social field: Shrinkage in the family role, the disconnection of some Muslim youth from the Islamic values, the spread of the evils of violence, extremism, drug-addiction, along with the rise in the rate of unemployment and the spread of serious diseases among youth.
B. In the cultural field: a deficit in religious education, lack of awareness-raising, cultural and psychological alienation among the youth, along with a shortage in trainings for those active in the field of youth and the aggravated crisis in terms of a mature dialogue between religious institutions and youth, all of these have led to conversions to other faiths or disregard for Islamic values.
C. In the political and economic fields: The lack of youth participation in decision-making and in politics has resulted in the absence of youth in the evolvement of economic and poverty alleviation policies. The gap between the social strata grew wider economically and socially with a rising cost of living, declining wages, and disproportions between the outputs of education and the needs of the labor market along with an insufficiency in program funding.
D. In the Area of Education: There is a general weakness in terms of the quality of youth and general education programs and a failure to keep abreast with modern technologies on the part of the centers of learning.
E. In the field of environment: The youth's disconnection from activities in environmental programs and failure to tap on environmental resources as investment and job-opportunities for youth, along with a disinterest in the youth's environmental awareness.

Youth everywhere in the world are faced with similar disconnection challenges, and the youth in Muslim countries are no exception. The impact of religious structures and imposed structural and cultural values does not always guarantee that youth will not

¹⁶⁸ Organization for Islamic Cooperation, *Key Challenges of Youth in OIC Countries* (Ankara, Turkey: Organization for Islamic Cooperation, Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries, 2015), <http://www.sesrtcic.org/files/article/525.pdf>.

¹⁶⁹ Source: Organization for Islamic Cooperation, *Key Challenges of Youth in OIC Countries*.

be impacted. Disconnection in the OIC framework occurs across all facets of social, cultural, political, economic, education and environment youth life. These challenges require thoughtful responses to reduce the negative outcomes of which radicalization is one.

At a rate of over 15 percent youth unemployment remains a challenge for OIC countries.¹⁷⁰ This high youth unemployment rate contributes to the fact that youth are

Experiencing tremendous levels of stress due to limited opportunities for social mobility and due to restrictions on fully participating in social, cultural, economic and political life. This state of affairs leads in many cases to social turmoil and political unrest.¹⁷¹

The reasons above are the same risk factors cited in Figure 1 and underscore the importance of these variables in reducing youth disconnection. Fundamental and real change at every level is required, especially in Muslim countries as well as in developed countries with significant Muslim populations. These countries need to build a more inclusive and tolerant society and aim at reducing poverty and increasing participation in education, politics, civil society and organs of government. Youth employment rates decreased marginally in OIC countries from 45.4 percent in 2000 to 44.4 percent in 2012.¹⁷² Religious beliefs in these countries influence the likelihood of female employment. Females are less likely to enter the labor force given the high rate of youth unemployment.

Given the rapid and evolving nature of change in OIC countries due to population shifts, there are also many other issues are now impacting youth disconnection. Those challenges include broader social health and welfare issues affecting social mobility as well as other relevant issues, such as the use of tobacco, drug and alcohol use, mental health issues, and technology. Youth now face more health related issues without the ability to pay for healthcare, which increases public health expenditures and costs. Any changes to policy in an attempt to address these issues should be viewed from a position

¹⁷⁰ Organization for Islamic Cooperation, *Key Challenges of Youth in OIC Countries*, 3.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 14.

of understanding and compassion. Global research on youth employment is equally disappointing. According to a 2015 International Labor Organization (ILO) report, “the worldwide unemployment rate among 15- to 24-year-olds is 13 percent, or 74 million youth, and is set to rise.”¹⁷³ The likelihood is this number reported here may be six to seven times higher because youth who are underemployed or underpaid are not included.¹⁷⁴ This leads to a greater disparity of income and wealth; young women are disproportionately impacted. The ILO report citing the work of Dr. Marjorie Woods notes,

In unequal societies, democracies are more likely to be corrupted, workers are more likely to be exploited and abused, and the safety net for the poor or vulnerable is weakened. The ILO report states social unrest and possible violence is linked to rising inequality and youth unemployment. Social unrest is said to have ‘shot up’ during the financial crisis, and worldwide, currently sits at 10 percent higher than before the crisis.¹⁷⁵

The minimizing and removal of barriers to youth unemployment and underemployment, as well as lack of access to education, can be considered vital factors affecting the social, economic, political, and mental health of a society. If not addressed, youth unemployment and underemployment may continue to create wealth and income inequality, engender poverty, and lead to racial and social problems, such as drug and alcohol abuse, mental problems, and a host of other issues with lasting and generational effects. Furthermore, it possibly can lead to youth disconnection and can serve as drivers for youth searching for relevance. Also, it may result in this disenfranchised population seeking that relevance through the radicalization process and potentially ending with terrorist extremism.

I. CONCLUSION

The expectation of education and employment in the United States is not a guarantee but the right of access is. Youth who are disconnected and not part of the

¹⁷³ John Butler, “Youth Unemployment, Income Inequality Keep Rising,” *Inter Press Service News Agency*, February 6, 2016, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2015/02/youth-unemployment-income-inequality-keep-rising/>.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

process of education and employment may turn inward and express their anger in the same way youth who are educated do, but for different reasons. Youth who are educated often become frustrated because they are not able to receive an income commensurate with their education, and they may feel deprived because they are not realizing the full promise of their education. When faced with high levels of unemployment, educated youth can become further marginalized, which may lead to even greater frustration with violence as an outcome. Youth who are disconnected more than likely are also frustrated because the ability to participate in education and employment is beyond their reach, and they become frustrated because they do not have an education or the skills required to find employment.

IV. RADICALIZATION IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES, EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES

The radicalizing factors of young people in Europe and beyond, however varied, are nonetheless rooted in socio-economic stimuli or the lack thereof: a lack of social and cultural integration, a lack of economic opportunity, a lack of employment. When hope and opportunity are eclipsed, Mr. Neumann suggested, extremism will often feed off of the resulting despair.

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A. FOREIGN FIGHTERS AND THEIR ORIGINS

The number of radicalized foreign fighters to ISIS and other terrorist groups increased over the past few years and Western countries have continued to provide a supply line. As of September 2015, the estimated number of foreign fighters in Syria was about 28,000, according to the Justice Department.¹⁷⁶ However, in 2011, estimates placed that number at less than 1,100; it increased to 8,500 in 2012, and more than tripled in 2015 to 25,000 and is currently, estimated to be close to 30,000.¹⁷⁷ Both the United Nations (UN) and the United States agree on these estimates.¹⁷⁸ In a July 2015 UN special meeting of “member states on stemming the flow of foreign fighters, it was reported that there are more than 25,000 fighters in Iraq and Syria representing more than 100 countries.”¹⁷⁹ Contrary to some views, the number of foreign fighters joining ISIS continues to increase.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Alex P. Schmid, *Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates: Conceptual and Data Issues* (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2015), <https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ICCT-Schmid-Foreign-Terrorist-Fighter-Estimates-Conceptual-and-Data-Issues-October20152.pdf>.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive, *Background Note* (prepared for Special Meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee with Member States and Relevant International and Regional Organizations on Stemming the Flow of Foreign Terrorist Fighters, Madrid, July 2015), <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/0721Special%20Meeting%20Madrid%20-%20General%20background%20Note.pdf>.

¹⁸⁰ Schmid, *Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates*.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the makeup of foreign fighters who joined terrorist groups over the past six years. This chapter also provides a context and framework for the previous chapters to tie the theoretical framework of relative deprivation, psychological motivations, social movement theory, and other theories as a way to understand the increase in the number of Muslim youth radicalized to terrorism. This chapter is divided into three sections outlining the various regions and countries foreign from which the fighters come. The first section focuses on foreign fighters who come from Muslim countries, and this emphasizes that the problem of radicalization is not just a Western one. The next section focuses on foreign fighters whose origin is from Western Europe, which indicates how radicalization to terrorist organizations has spread among Muslim youth in this region. The following section highlights the nature and scope of the issue in the United States and seeks to understand the scope of the issue, especially among Muslim youth who are disconnected and marginalized. The remainder of this introduction describes some methodological issues concerning the data.

The estimates above indicate that the issue of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq is a global problem (more than 100 countries). Furthermore, as shown above, there has been a significant increase in foreign fighters in a five- to six-year time span. This poses serious threats to homeland security for Western countries in particular, especially since about 20 percent of the foreign fighters are Westerners.¹⁸¹ The numbers reported in this thesis are merely estimates that should be greeted with caution because of methodological problems. Not only are they sourced and reported differently. It is also impossible to verify and confirm, they are often represent different periods of time. Additionally, they comprise of different reporting mechanisms and include duplicate counting; overall, they are problematic. However, despite all these shortcomings, these figures are still a useful gauge of the extent and scope of the issue and can largely be defended by those reporting it.

All the estimates from various sources provide corroboration that the number of foreign fighters have grown significantly in a relative short time. This is cause for

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 1.

concern for governments of the home countries where these fighters come from. At some point, they have to return to their home country. The question is: What then?

To complicate things further, there is very little consensus on the definition of a foreign fighter among scholars or institutions. Navigating the definitional complexities and nuances of what constitutes a “foreign fighter” is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, from a contextual perspective, it is important to identify the meaning of a “foreign fighter” because it impacts the overall statistics reported throughout this thesis. The work of Alex Schmid is especially helpful concerning this. He notes that a foreign fighter is one who “voluntarily leaves his home country to engage in armed conflict in an area with no apparent link bound by a sense of Muslim religious duty.”¹⁸² Religion is certainly an important factor in the decision to become a foreign fighter, but is it not the only one. Other factors, such as economic and political deprivation, the West as the common enemy, joining the caliphate, etc., are equally strong motivators. These factors confirm some of the underlying psychological reasons of radicalization identified through the terrorism research of Horgan, McCauley and Moskalenko, and others discussed in the Chapter II.¹⁸³

Schmid cautions that not all who go to Syria go there to fight. Included in these estimates are women, who join their husbands, and children, which may explain in part why some of the estimates are high.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, foreign fighters can be thought of broadly as a term describing those fighters who are not citizens of the country they are fighting in or fighting for but do so out of religious duty. The phenomenon of fighting in a foreign country is not new, but the context and dynamics in which these fighters fight is different, layered, and complex.

¹⁸² J. E. Arasli, *Archipelago SYRAQ: Jihadist Foreign Fighters from A to Z. 200 Essential Facts You Need to Know about Jihadist Expeditionary Warfare in the Middle East* (Baku, Azerbaijan: Teknur, 2015), as cited in Schmid, *Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates*.

¹⁸³ Horgan, *Leaving Terrorism Behind*; McCauley and Moskalenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization.”

¹⁸⁴ Alex P. Schmid and Judith Tinnes, *Foreign (Terrorist) Fighters with IS: A European Perspective* (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2015), <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ICCT-Schmid-Foreign-Terrorist-Fighters-with-IS-A-European-Perspective-December2015.pdf>, 13.

The profile presented here provides a framework for the next sections in this chapter by offering a breakdown by region from where foreign fighters come. This sets the stage for an in-depth look at foreign fighters from Muslim countries, Western Europe, and the United States. The overarching purpose is to understand why so many foreign fighters are joining terrorist organizations and to inspect it through the lenses of theoretical frames such as relative deprivation, social inequality, and some of the psychological perspectives discussed in Chapter II. The regional data of foreign fighters provided by Alex Schmid and Judith Tinnes and others is especially helpful because it offers a glimpse from where fighters originate (see Table 3).

Table 3. Regional Background of Foreign Fighters¹⁸⁵

Regional Origin	Number of Foreign Fighters		
	Fall 2014 ¹⁸⁶	Fall 2015 ¹⁸⁷	% Change
Middle East	6,141	8,240	34.2%
North Africa (Maghreb)	5,660	8,000	41.3%
Western Europe	2,770	5,000	80.5%
Former Soviet Union	1,585	4,700	196.5%
Asia-Pacific	468		N/A
(Western) Balkans	442	875	98.0%
South Asia	385	-	N/A
South East Asia	-	900	N/A
Sub-Saharan Africa	170	-	N/A
North America	42	280	566.7%

As depicted in Table 3, foreign fighters come from numerous regions and are diverse in terms of ethnic, cultural, language, and racial backgrounds. This data also

¹⁸⁵ Adapted from Schmid, *Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates*, 23.

¹⁸⁶ Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq* (New York: Soufan Group, 2015), http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate1.pdf, 5.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

supports the claim that the trend of foreign fighters are increasing and not decreasing.¹⁸⁸ The role of the internet that serves as a recruiting vehicle of Western Muslims and others. What is most concerning is the significant upward tick in foreign fighters from the United States and Russia from a percentage change standpoint, followed by Western Europe. The reasons for the high number of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq are varied, and the assumptions are these reasons probably differ from one region to the other. One of the reasons already identified has been the common draw of religious duty. Other factors, such as economic, political, social, thrill seeking, relative deprivation, also come into play. The economic, political, and social displacement of refugees who have lost everything are all factors that fuel this flow to ISIS and other terrorist groups.¹⁸⁹

Radicalization to terrorist groups, such as ISIS and others, are not just a Western problem as is discussed later; it is also a Muslim problem. Being a Muslim, living in the Middle East or in a Muslim country does exempt one from being radicalized to terrorism. The following section explores the scope of the issue of radicalization to terrorism by analyzing the number of fighters from Muslim countries, their reasons and motivations. In addition, it connects it to relative deprivation theory, social movement theory, social inequality theory and some of the other theoretical underpinnings. Dissatisfaction, alienation, being denied the right to live in a country of which one is a citizen, injustice (especially the large, displaced Syrian populations), perceived inequality, and relative deprivation are strong motivators for Muslim youth to become radicalized and join terrorist groups.

B. FOREIGN FIGHTERS FROM MUSLIM COUNTRIES

The word foreign fighter is somewhat of a misnomer as previously discussed. Given the absence of a global database to report the names of foreign fighters, countries rely on systems of self-reporting and best guesses, lacking accuracy and uniform data reporting standards let alone systems integration. Regionally, Muslim countries are

¹⁸⁸ Schmid, *Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates*; Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters*, 5; Blog Across the Green Mountain, as cited in Arasli, *Archipelago SYRAQ*.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 14.

responsible for the majority of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq with six out of ten coming from these countries. Europe is a close second as a region. See Table 4.

Table 4. Number of Foreign Fighters from Top Ten Countries¹⁹⁰

Country of Origin	Number of Foreign Fighters	
	U.S. Congressional Homeland Security Committee Estimate ¹⁹¹	National Government Estimate ¹⁹²
Tunisia	5,000	ca. 3,000 (official figure, April 2014)
Saudi Arabia	2,275	ca. 2,500 (official estimate, May 2014)
Jordan	2,000	no data
Russia	1,700	(FSB, April 2014)
France	1,550	over 700 (official figure, April 2014)
Turkey	1,400	about 400 (official estimate, April 2014)
Morocco	1,200	about 1,500 (official figure, April 2014)
Lebanon	900	no data
Germany	700	about 300 (BfV, March 2014)
United Kingdom	700	about 400 (official est., March 2014)
	= Muslim Countries	

ISIS has enjoyed success in recruiting fighters from local territories under its control.¹⁹³ The data reveals foreign fighters are more diverse and younger than ever. Another troubling aspect is the fact that a significant number of young women, in some

¹⁹⁰ Adapted from Schmid, *Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates*.

¹⁹¹ Adapted from U.S. Congress Homeland Security Committee, *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel* (Washington, DC: U.S. Congress Homeland Security Committee, 2011), 11.

¹⁹² Adapted from U.S. Congress Homeland Security Committee, *Final Report of the Task Force* and from 2014 by national governments.

¹⁹³ Schmid, *Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates*.

countries up to 20 percent, are recruited and joining ISIS.¹⁹⁴ Young women typically do not engage in fighting but serve as brides and provide companionship.¹⁹⁵

In close proximity to the Syrian border, Tunisia has a significant number of disconnected youth, both educated and uneducated, as well as a fractured religious identity with a renewed focus of Salafi jihadist, a high unemployment rate, poor socioeconomic conditions, and it is in political transition. All of these factors fuel radicalization.¹⁹⁶ Tunisia has experienced the largest number of youth who are disconnected and joined ISIS, chiefly due to government instability and lack of economic opportunity.¹⁹⁷ For Tunisia to experience such as the high rate of disconnected youth who are radicalized and turning to terrorism is an alarming trend. More and more youth are disconnected from economic and political participation.

Repressive and autocratic governments, unstable economic growth, poor labor and employment policies are all factors that lead youth to disconnection and frustration. The Arab Spring of 2011 serves as a powerful symbol and reminder of how the frustration and anger of youth can spur a national movement and ignite violence. Anger and frustration are strong factors may have everything to do with relative deprivation. The work of Gurr is relevant in the Tunisian context because he helps explain how mass discontent that stems from a gap between “expected” and “achieved” wellbeing, which results in political violence.¹⁹⁸ According to Gurr, collective violence results directly from relative deprivation. Specific to this point, Gurr contends that “the greater the intensity and scope of relative deprivation, the greater the magnitude of collective violence.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ United Nations University, “Emerging from the Black Hole—The UN’s Fight Against Youth Radicalization,” June 10, 2015, Our World, <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/emerging-from-the-black-hole-the-uns-fight-against-youth-radicalization>.

¹⁹⁵ Schmid, *Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates*.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Pierre Bienaimé, “Here’s Why So Many of Tunisia’s Youth Are Drawn to ISIS,” *Business Insider*, October 22, 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/heres-why-so-many-of-tunisias-youth-are-drawn-to-isis-2014-10>.

¹⁹⁸ Gurr *Why Men Rebel*.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 33.

Financial compensation is a powerful motivator and provides a vehicle for these young radicalized terrorist to support their families, especially for those youth who comes from less affluent family backgrounds.²⁰⁰ If underprivileged Muslim youth have very little prospects for the future, live in relative poverty, or are “frustrated achievers” terrorism seems like an attractive and economically viable option. There are also other reasons such as an attraction to an ideology, religion, and seeking identity and relevance. Horgan cites one motivating reason to be the “belief that joining a movement offers social and psychological rewards such as adventure, camaraderie and a heightened sense of identity.”²⁰¹ The psychological factors and reasons can often outweigh the financial or economic reasons, even in the midst of dire economic need.

The war fought by ISIS is as much a war of ideas and ideology as it is one of territory and region. The aspirational aspects and appeal of the war in Syria and Iraq, where youth are recruited regionally from other Muslim countries to escape poverty, marginalization, economic, and social deprivation are considered key drivers to radicalization. Terrorist groups provide relevance and meaning, and to some extent, they provide a sense of hope to the lives of impacted youth.

The literature reveals no direct relationship between terrorism, education and poverty, and if one there is one, it is probably negligible.²⁰² In her research, Carolyn Ziemke echoes a similar theme.²⁰³ However, in a study conducted by Clarke Richardson, he found that there is a positive relationship between education, unemployment, and the number of terrorist related attacks in 56 countries.²⁰⁴ What would cause such a large number of educated youth in Tunisia and other parts of the world to engage in terrorism?

It is the contention of this thesis that when youth experience high levels of relative deprivation, the perception or feeling that they have less than what they should have, they

²⁰⁰ United Nations University, “Emerging from the Black Hole.”

²⁰¹ Horgan, *Leaving Terrorism Behind*.

²⁰² Krueger and Malečková, “Education, Poverty, and Terrorism,” 119–144.

²⁰³ Ziemke, *Perceived Oppression*.

²⁰⁴ Clare Richardson, “Relative Deprivation Theory in Terrorism: A Study of Higher Education and Unemployment as Predictors of Terrorism” (master’s thesis, New York University, 2011).

become dissatisfied. This leads to frustration and anger, which in turn are expressed in terrorism.²⁰⁵ Derek Birrell, who studied relative deprivation within northern Ireland, reminds us “that tensions in groups originate when there is gap between “what should be versus what is” within the context of collective value satisfaction.”²⁰⁶ The psychology of “frustrated achievers” as it relates to relative deprivation has been explored in Chapter II and forms an integral part of why individuals engage in terrorism. Relative deprivation among those that have a formal education and experience economic, social, and political marginalization is not just a phenomenon experienced in Muslim countries, it is also a phenomenon that is prevalent in Western countries, especially in Western Europe. This requires closer examination.

C. FOREIGN FIGHTERS FROM EUROPE AND WESTERN COUNTRIES

As previously indicated, the estimate of foreign fighters from Western Europe in Syria and Iraq ranges from between 5,000 and 7,000, and these fighters are primarily identified as either second generation Muslims or those that recently converted to Islam.²⁰⁷ The literature shows that Western European foreign fighters who go to Syria and Iraq do so for “different reasons, however, the role of religion in the decision to become radicalized is an important one.”²⁰⁸

The centrality of a group identity has been a key factor in the radicalization process. Most of these foreign fighters know one another, come from the same neighborhood, or belong to the same sports or social clubs.²⁰⁹ A good example of these radicalized community members is the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris in which many of the attackers knew one another and came from the same Molenbeek neighborhood in Brussels.²¹⁰ Western Europe continues to serve as a conduit and a

²⁰⁵ Daniel Egiegba Agbibo, “Why Boko Haram Exists: The Relative Deprivation Perspective,” *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 3 no. 1 (2013): 144–157.

²⁰⁶ Derek Birrell, “Relative Deprivation as a Factor in Conflict in Northern Ireland,” *Sociological Review* 20, no. 3 (1972): 317–343.

²⁰⁷ Schmid and Tinnes, *Foreign (Terrorist) Fighters with IS*, 13.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters*.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 13.

supply line of radicalized individuals seeking to join foreign fighting efforts, including to ISIS and other extremist organizations. Furthermore, joining a terrorist group reinforces social relationships, a common-shared set of values around an ideology, recognition, self-worth, and even compensation.²¹¹ Terrorist groups to some extent provide a sense of cultural relevance that seems to strengthen the identity and self-worth of the recruited fighters.

A review of the literature reveals that there is no single profile of foreign fighters coming from Western Europe. According to Alex Schmid, some terrorists are from low income families while others are middle class. The education background of foreign fighters varies across Western European countries; however, they are predominantly male, immigrant, and between the ages 16 to 29.²¹² In Krueger and Malečková's study of the relationship between education, poverty, and terrorism, they found that terrorists are better educated and come from affluent family backgrounds.²¹³ Caroline Ziemke states that an individual who functions in a robust democratic society is less likely to be involved in terrorism; in contrast, persons who live in authoritarian and dictatorial societies accompanied by poverty, violence, and political marginalization have a greater likelihood to turn to terrorism.²¹⁴

Western Europe clearly falls within the first part of this description of Ziemke, yet it is falling prey to the same level of discontent and frustration as individuals who live in authoritarian societies. It is evident that something else is going on in Western Europe and other Western countries that is contributing to so many youth joining ISIS and other terrorist groups. These youth are making rational and deliberate choices to engage in terrorism.²¹⁵ In his research, James Piazza found "minority economic discrimination to be a strong predictor of domestic terrorism regarding the level of general economic

²¹¹ Ziemke, *Perceived Oppression*.

²¹² Schmid and Tinnes, *Foreign (Terrorist) Fighters with IS*, 35.

²¹³ Krueger and Malečková, "Education, Poverty, and Terrorism," 141.

²¹⁴ Ziemke, *Perceived Oppression*.

²¹⁵ Krueger and Malečková, "Education, Poverty, and Terrorism," 119–144.

development.”²¹⁶ Economic minority discrimination from a social standpoint is often overlooked, but serves as an igniter of terrorism.²¹⁷

It is important to understand the social context of youth who converge to terrorism. When youth, especially Muslim youth, are disconnected from being active participants in educational and employment processes, or when educated youth cannot find meaningful employment, it leads to disillusionment, frustration, and anger that manifest itself in many forms. Structural poverty and inequality within countries according to Gurr serves as “breeding grounds for violent political movements in general and terrorism specifically.”²¹⁸ Understanding the factors that give rise to inequality and prevention of individuals becoming full participants in terrorism is key to understanding relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is borne out of inequality stemming from a void, which is between what people want and what they actually get. If this void or gap, whether perceived or real, between expectation and gratification left unfulfilled is expected to lead to frustration and ultimately violence.²¹⁹ Violence as it relates to terrorism and as contended in this thesis is the result of frustration and anger that has built up over time as a result of such unmet needs. There are similar patterns of disconnection among Muslim youth in Western Europe as a result of relative deprivation. This is also evident in the United States.

D. MUSLIM-AMERICAN YOUTH AND RADICALIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES

The primary purpose of this section is to focus on Muslim youth in the United States by offering a demographic profile, followed by an analysis of the scope of radicalization as a precursor to Chapter V. The Pew Research Center, reported that Muslims “are the fastest growing religion in the world and estimated to be about 1.6

²¹⁶ James A. Piazza, “Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination and Domestic Terrorism,” *Journal of Peace Research*, 48, no. 3 (2011): 339–353.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ted Robert Gurr, “Economic Factors,” in *Working Group Report, International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security*, Vol. 1 (Madrid: Club de Madrid, 2005), http://www.clubmadrid.org/img/secciones/Club_de_Madrid_Volume_I_The_Causes_of_Terrorism.pdf.

²¹⁹ Agbiboa, “Why Boko Haram Exists,” 144–157.

billion,” which is roughly about 23 percent of the world population as of 2010.²²⁰ Muslims in the United States are “estimated at about 2.75 million of which about 1.8 million are adults, and 63 percent first generation Americans.”²²¹ Approximately, 21 percent of the U.S. Muslim population did not graduate from high school, and about 24 percent possess either a college or graduate degree.²²² Muslim Americans are fairly young with about one third falling into the age group 18 to 29.²²³ Even though Muslims share Islam as a common religion, their ethnic, racial, social, cultural, and political differences are many, providing a context for exploring youth disconnection and the relative deprivation factors that lead to anger and frustration.

Muslim Americans are racially and ethnically very diverse with “approximately 38 percent of Muslim Americans describing themselves as white, 26 percent black, 20 percent Asian, and 16 percent other or mixed race.”²²⁴ Racially and ethnically, there is no single group who constitutes and represents Muslims. Religious affiliation is closely linked to the country of origin. For example, among first and second generation immigrants from Arab countries, 56 percent are Sunni, 19 percent are Shia, and 23 percent only state they are Muslim.²²⁵ Pakistanis and south Asians are overwhelmingly Sunni (72 and 82 percent, respectively), while most Iranians are overwhelmingly Shia (91 percent).²²⁶

America as a melting pot of different immigrant ethnicities, cultures, races, religions, nationalities, and people is based on an assumption that everybody will fit in and assimilate once they arrive; this may be a fallacy. Second generation Muslim

²²⁰ Michael Lipka, “Muslims and Islam: Key Findings in the U.S. and around the World,” Pew Research Center, July 22, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/22/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/>.

²²¹ Pew Research Center, “Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism,” August 30, 2011, <http://www.people-press.org/2011/08/30/muslim-americans-no-signs-of-growth-in-alienation-or-support-for-extremism/>.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

immigrants have often been targets of radicalization because of the disconnection they experience in their new Western cultures. As outlined in an article by Sarah Lyons-Padilla et al., “more attention should be directed to immigrants’ identity processes, or, how people manage their identities with their culture of origin (for example, home country or religion) and their identities with their new home country’s culture.”²²⁷ It is important to understand how the lack of cultural and religious integration into the dominant culture can also lead to disconnection from a psychological standpoint.

Compared to Muslims in other Western European countries, Muslim Americans are more integrated in American life. However, despite this picture presented above, underemployment among young Muslim Americans is prevalent, with 18 percent working part-time, and 29 percent unemployed.²²⁸ This high level of youth disconnection among Muslim American can lead to exclusion and marginalization. This is coupled with the fact that first generation immigrants are still dealing with two cultures that they have to reconcile from a psychological standpoint. Second-generation Muslim youth have to find their own identity navigating between the duality of being both Muslim and American, while also dealing with disconnection and other marginalization factors that challenges those identities and values.

The Syrian refugee problem holds various implications and security concerns for the United States especially the plan to increase the number of women and children admitted to 10,000.²²⁹ The state of Michigan is the top destination, especially the Detroit areas, given its large Arab immigrant population.²³⁰ One in 10 refugees or roughly 1,036 of the 10,000 have settled in the Detroit area, which is an important point, especially given the higher number of disconnected youth for Michigan.

²²⁷ Sarah Lyons-Padilla et al., “Belonging Nowhere: Marginalization and Radicalization Risk among Muslim Immigrants,” *Behavioral Science & Policy* 1, no. 2 (Winter 2015): 2.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Tyler Durden, “Obama Admits 10,000 Syrian Refugees: This is Where They Are Headed,” Zero Hedge, August 30, 2016, <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2016-08-30/obama-admits-10000-syrian-refugees-ahead-schedule-may-put-them-work-detroit>.

²³⁰ Ibid.

Given the diverse religious and other practices outlined above, it is hard to make generalizations about Muslims in the United States as it relates to sympathy with terrorist or other groups.²³¹ Muslims in the United States generally live in urban or metropolitan areas with large populations and ease of access to cultural and religious institutions and services. Group identity and community forms an important aspect of Muslim culture and is evident by where they live as outlined above. There are also a number of imprisoned African Americans (estimated to be around 30 percent) who have converted to Islam while in prison.²³²

In a 2015 survey was administered to “198 first and second-generation Muslim immigrant adult youth” in the United States.²³³ The purpose of the survey was to understand the contributing factors to radicalization among immigrants, who are considered to be a demographic with potential vulnerability.²³⁴ The researchers found that those Muslim American youth “who identify with neither their heritage culture nor the culture they are living in feel marginalized and insignificant,” are significantly more likely to be radicalized than those who feel more integrated with either culture.²³⁵ This likelihood was much more significant when paired with “a perception of discrimination against Muslims in the U.S.”²³⁶ This research is consistent with other studies and confirms religion is not the primary motivator for becoming radicalized.²³⁷ Their study found that

Marginalized immigrants in the United States may be at much greater risk for feeling a loss of significance, which, in turn, may be related to increased support for fundamentalist groups and ideologies. A loss of significance stemming from personal trauma, shame, humiliation, and perceived maltreatment is associated with increased support for radicalism. Experiences of discrimination exacerbate this process.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Lyons-Padilla et al., “Belonging Nowhere,” 4.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Declan Butler, “Terrorism Science: 5 Insights into Jihad in Europe,” *Nature*, 528 (December 2015): 20–21. doi:10.1038/528020a.

Discrimination by others in the larger society was associated with amplified feelings of a loss of significance, which, in turn, predicted support for fundamentalist groups and causes. Marginalization and discrimination are particularly potent when experienced in tandem.²³⁸

Discrimination as a form of oppression can lead to alienation and marginalization, and this can result in questions of self-worth and value judgment from an identity standpoint. Regardless of form (economic, social, racial, political, education or employment), discrimination often serves as a stimulus for the development of minority grievances and reinforces social exclusion on some level.²³⁹ Additionally, discrimination can often lead to distrust, fear, frustration, and anger, which can make individuals more susceptible to radicalization and for Muslim youth to join terrorist groups. Discrimination of Muslims, in general, and Muslim youth, in particular, can also be viewed through the prisms of relative deprivation and consolidated inequality theories. The consolidated inequality theory is closely aligned to the relative deprivation theory as it relates to the issue of race give sharp rise feelings of injustice that requires a response.

E. CONCLUSION

Factors contributing to the radicalization of Muslim youth should be understood within the context in which these youth live. Societal and public policy factors contribute to a negative sense of self-worth among Muslim-American youth. If ignored, this will likely lead to increases in radicalization in these communities. The connection between disconnection and radicalization is one that should be taken seriously. This chapter and the preceding ones show that there is a causal relationship between disconnection and radicalization. Chapter V demonstrates from a data analysis standpoint the nature and scope of such a relationship and looks at key variables.

²³⁸ Lyons-Padilla et al., “Belonging Nowhere,” 8.

²³⁹ Piazza, “Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination.”

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V. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The more important reason is that the research itself provides an important long-run perspective on the issues that we face on a day-to-day basis.

Ben Bernanke

A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the primary research question: Does disconnection among youth in the United States cause radicalization to terrorism? Based on the literature review, it is clear that radicalization as a concept is highly subjected and hard to measure from a quantitative standpoint. There is very little empirical research to measure radicalization. By considering the wide definitional variations of radicalization found in the literature, this research seeks to determine if disconnections leads to radicalization among youth. However, the data and prior research demonstrates that disconnection and poverty does not lead to radicalization. Individuals from all walks of life (poor, middle-class, educated, non-educated, young, adult, etc.) are radicalized for various reasons, including political, environmental, religious ideology, social, and economic ones. As noted, not everyone who is radicalized commits violence to achieve their goals such as political or economic participation, end of oppression or conflict, etc.

However, some individuals who are radicalized and proclaim a jihadist ideology may also express their views by tangible demonstration of violence. Terrorism-related arrests and plots in the United States have been on the increase since 9/11 as this chapter shows. Some of these plots have been prevented and some were not. In those instances that terrorist related plots were not prevented, many innocent victims were killed or wounded. It is such acts of violent outcomes that this thesis uses to quantitatively measure radicalization and to analyze and understand its impact.

B. DATA

Much of the data in this chapter comes from two datasets on terrorism in the U.S. post-September 11, 2001, obtained from New America Foundation, “a think tank and

civic enterprise committed to renewing American politics, prosperity, and purpose in the Digital Age.”²⁴⁰ The terrorism data from New America consists of two data sets. The first data set is labeled People Protected and consists of 30 variables or data points for 386 terrorists who have been either killed or arrested in the United States. This provides important background information relevant to this study. This data, analyzed in the third section of this chapter, provides a framework and context for the second data set as well as the section on the qualitative data analysis. The variables include name, age, gender, type of attack, marital status, name of terror plot, and citizenship status. It does not, however, include religious affiliation. Appendix A provides a complete listing of 30 variables associated with 386 cases. It is important to note that this data set seeks to identify the terrorist associated with a particular planned terrorist attack. For example, the 2002 Buffalo Six individuals involved in this terrorist plot, includes data such as the names, age, gender, marital status, whether the individuals were charged or are deceased, their citizenship status, etc. This data set focuses on the number of people involved in a particular plot. As a result, this data set lists all the individuals involved or associated with a particular plot, indicating the overall number of plots and the number of people involved since September 11, 2001. In some instances, the data for some of the variables was either missing or not provided. Supplemental data from scholarly sources is used to fill in gaps, particularly regarding religious affiliation of perpetrators.

Many of the terrorist plots and attacks are included in the first data set, but the second data set goes further and is used to quantify radicalization as defined in this study. For purposes of this thesis, radicalization is defined as *a process wherein an individual or a group chooses to adopt, internalize, and act on a new ideology or set of beliefs aimed at challenging the prevailing social, economic, political status quo with or without violent outcomes*. Radicalization in this study is measured using the START variables, such as the “number of people who died, number of people injured, the number of attempted terrorist attacks, and, the number of ideologically motivated severe crimes (violent or non-violent), as they may serve as a gateway to other ideologically motivated

²⁴⁰ New America, “Our Story,” accessed October 15, 2016, <http://www.newamerica.org/our-story/>.

violence.”²⁴¹ These variables are listed in the data set from New America, labeled Terror Attacks, and consist of 27 variables for 200 cases. It is analyzed in the fourth section of this chapter. Many of the terrorist plots and attacks are included in the first data set, but this data set goes further and is used to quantify radicalization as defined in this study. It includes all of the terror plots used for the People Protected data, but the focus of this data set is on the terror attacks, not the number of people arrested or associated with a particular plot. Some of the variables included in this data set are name of terror plot/attack, victims wounded, victims killed, plot status (if it was prevented or not), the method of prevention, etc. Appendix B provides a complete listing of 27 variables associated with 200 cases.

Taken together, these two data sets provide a detail picture of the number of successful terrorist attacks, the number of attacks not prevented, and number of victims wounded and killed. Appendix C provides a breakdown of the profile data previously discussed. The dataset is limited in its utility to address whether Muslim youth in metropolitan areas with high rates of disconnection areas are at a greater risk of radicalization as compared to Muslim youth in metropolitan areas with lower rates of disconnection because it does not contain a variable for religion. Despite this limitation, the data is still useful in providing trend analysis and an overall picture of terrorist attacks.

These data does not provide the religious affiliation of attackers or an estimate of the total dollar value of damages associated with terrorist attacks. Additionally, it falls short measuring radicalization in its entirety. This research does not explore the relationship between and among the characteristics related to ideology and religious beliefs of terrorist, between holding a particular jihadist ideology and achieving the aims of such an ideology. These limitations have been explored in some ways by researchers in this area.²⁴² Other characteristics, such as success of certain terrorist groups to recruit

²⁴¹ LaFree, Smarick, and Fishman, *Community-level Indicators*.

²⁴² National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, *From Extremist to Terrorist: Identifying the Characteristics of Communities Where Perpetrators Live and Pre-incident Activity Occurs Prior to Attacks* (College Park, MD: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2013), <http://fulbright.uark.edu/departments/sociology/terrorism-research-center/research.php>.

from certain economic and demographic profiles (high unemployment, lower income levels, large number of family members, etc.), were not explored in this research. Despite these limitations, the data is extremely helpful in answering the research question of this study.

C. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON TERRORISTS ARRESTED OR KILLED

According to the People Protected data, a total of 386 individuals were arrested and charged with terrorism in the United States from September 11, 2001, up to September 30, 2016 (as listed in Figure 2). The number of terrorism-related arrests and charges remained relative stable from 2002 to 2007 (as shown in Figure 2). In 2008, only five cases of terrorism-related arrests and charges were reported. In 2009, however, there was a large increase in the number of terrorist related arrests followed by a decline from 2010 to 2014. In 2015, there was a record high 77 terrorism-related arrests and charges; the largest and significant increase ever.²⁴³ (*Blank* in Figure 1 refers to those individuals arrested during this timeframe but where no year of the arrest was indicated in the data.)

Other data helps refine our understanding of how many plots were perpetrated by Muslims. A 2012 study by the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) determined that “there were 135 total plots by U.S.-originated non-Muslim perpetrators against the United States since 9/11. In comparison, there have been 60 total plots by U.S. and foreign-originated Muslim perpetrators since 9/11.”²⁴⁴ The research undertaken by John Mueller and published in a collection of case studies of almost every Islamic extremism case in the United States that provides an objective and detailed analysis of 98 cases of individuals radicalized to terrorism that was prevented.²⁴⁵ The case studies only include

²⁴³ New America, “In Depth: Terrorism in America After 9/11: A Comprehensive Up-to-date Source of Online Information about Terrorist Activity in the United States since 9/11,” accessed on October 15, 2016. <http://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/terrorism-in-america/part-i-overview-terrorism-cases-2001-today/>

²⁴⁴ Muslim Public Affairs Council, *Data on Post-9/11 Terrorism in the United States* (Washington, DC: Muslim Public Affairs Council, 2012), <http://www.mpac.org/assets/docs/publications/MPAC-Post-911-Terrorism-Data.pdf>.

²⁴⁵ John Mueller, ed., *Terrorism Since 9/11: The American Cases* (Columbus, OH: John Mueller, 2016), <http://politicalscience.osu.edu/faculty/jmueller/SINCE.pdf>.

those where the plots included violence and “came to light” before they occurred.²⁴⁶ What is especially helpful in Mueller’s work, and missing from the New America data, set is an attempt to provide an estimate of the policing cost involved in preventing terrorism is. For example, the “Lackawanna case concerns a group of twenty-something Muslim boys from Lackawanna, New York” was estimated to cost about \$3 million in policing and man-hour related costs only.²⁴⁷ Charles Kurzman, a sociologist at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, has investigated terrorist plots by Muslim-Americans.²⁴⁸ His data provides information missing in the New America data. Kurzman’s data include 81 Muslim-Americans associated with violent extremist plots in 2015, the highest annual total since 9/11 of which the majority involved travel (22 individuals) or attempted travel (23 individuals) to join terrorist groups.²⁵⁰ According to a George Washington University (GWU) Program on Extremism study, about approximately “40% of those arrested are converts to Islam. Approximately, a quarter of American Muslims are converts, they appear to be overrepresented among American ISIS supporters.”²⁵¹ All these various data sets indicates the relatively low number of terrorists attacks in the United States overall and the increase success of law enforcement in thwarting such attacks. The number of terrorist attacks in the United States that law enforcement are not able to prevent are becoming less predictable, more frequent, public, and violent. Also, the datasets all confirm that 2015 has been a particularly busy year for terrorist related arrests and activity in the United States. The data from New America provides a picture of the number of terrorism-related arrests in the United States after 9/11. Even though 2015 and 2016 have experienced a spike in terrorist related attacks in

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 3.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 80.

²⁴⁸ Charles Kurzman, David Schanzer, and Ebrahim Moosa, “Muslim-American Terrorism Since 9/11: Why So Rare?,” *The Muslim World* 101, no. 3 (2011): 464–483, https://sites.duke.edu/tcths/files/2013/06/Muslim_American_Terrorism_Since_9.11_Why_So_Rare.pdf.

²⁴⁹ Charles Kurzman. *Muslim-American Involvement with Violent Extremism* (Chapel Hill, NC: Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, 2016), https://sites.duke.edu/tcths/files/2013/06/Kurzman_Muslim-American_Involvement_in_Violent_Extremism_2015.pdf.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Lorenzo Vidino and Seamus Hughes, *ISIS in America: From Retweets to Raqqa* (Washington, DC: George Washington, 2015), <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/ISIS%20in%20America%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>.

the United States, the hope is that this trend is anomalous; only time will tell. These are listed as “(blank)” in Figure 2.²⁵²

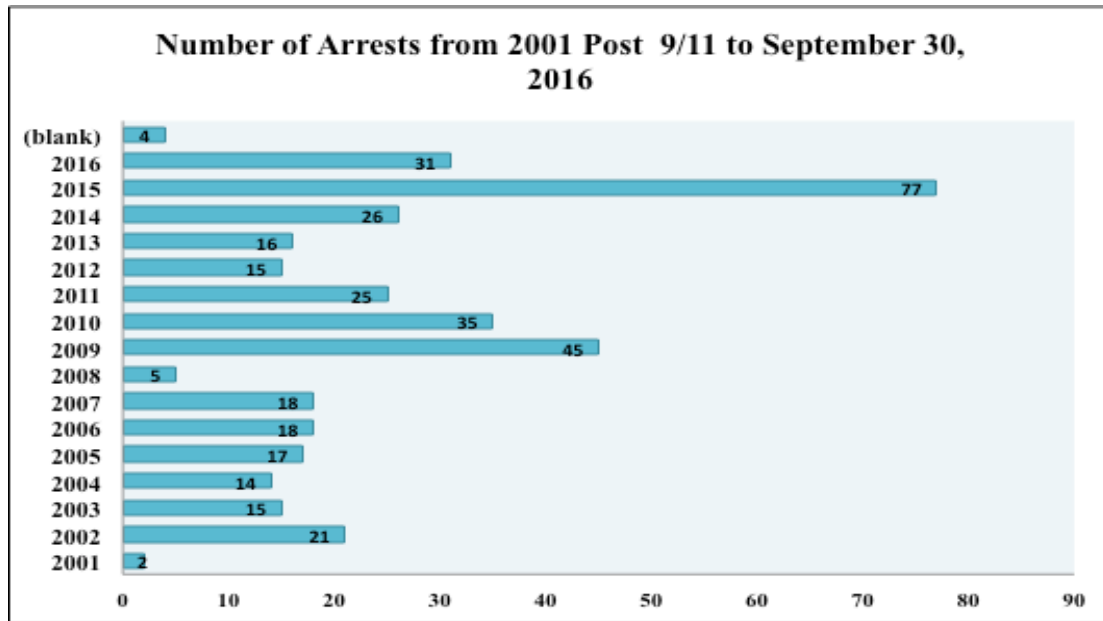


Figure 2. The Number of Terrorism-Related Arrests and Charges in the United States after September 11, 2001, to September 30, 2016²⁵³

(1) Age, Gender, and Marital Status

From September 11, 2001, to September 30, 2016, the average age of those arrested and charged with terrorism was 29 years, and the median age 26, and the majority of those arrested were male. For the same period, the average age of females arrested for terrorism was 33 years. The age of the youngest individual arrested was a 15-year-old male, and the oldest was 76 years old. The youngest female arrested was a 19-year-old, and the oldest was 63 years old. Ninety-three percent were male, and seven percent female.²⁵⁴ The GWU study mentioned above reported very similar age and

²⁵² New America, “In Depth.”

²⁵³ Source: New America, “In Depth.”

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

gender data.²⁵⁵ Forty three percent of those arrested and charged with terrorism in the United States after September 11, 2001, were unmarried, 37 percent were married, 14 had an unknown married status, five percent were divorced, and 1 percent was separated from their spouse.²⁵⁶

(2) Citizenship Status

For the period of the data, 53 percent of those arrested and charged with terrorism-related incidents were U.S.-born citizens, 23 percent were naturalized citizens, 10 percent were illegal immigrants, 4 percent were refugees, and only 3 percent held nonimmigrant visas, and 3 percent were permanent residents. Citizenship status was not listed for 49 individuals arrested and charged with terrorism-related incidents.²⁵⁷

(3) State of Residence for Those Charged with Terrorism

In the period studied, 15 percent of terrorists arrested and charged with terrorism indicated New York as their state of residence, which represents 16.3 percent of the total arrests. In addition, 10.7 percent lived in Minnesota, 10.7 percent in Virginia 8.7 percent in California, 7.9 percent in Florida, and 5.1 percent in Illinois.²⁵⁸ The data shows that terrorism-related arrests and charges are widespread in the United States with East Coast states (including New York, New Jersey, Georgia, Virginia, Florida, Massachusetts, Maine), accounting for 47 percent of all terrorism-related arrests and charges.

(4) Terrorists Who Had Contact with Foreign Militant Groups and Received Overseas Military Training

An analysis of the data indicates that, from after September 11, 2001, to September 30, 2016, of those terrorists arrested, one third (125 of 384) had contact with foreign militant groups prior to their arrests. Of those who indicated they had contact with foreign militants, about one third (or 42 of 125) said they received overseas military

²⁵⁵ Vidino and Hughes, *ISIS in America*.

²⁵⁶ New America, "In Depth."

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

training. Seven percent of those arrested had prior U.S. military training and experience.²⁵⁹ The data also shows that 43 percent of those who were arrested were radicalized online. The average age of those who were radicalized online is 32 years old, and the majority were male.²⁶⁰

(5) Terrorists Who Are Muslim-American

The data depicted in the Figure 3 for the number of Muslim-American terrorism suspects since 9/11 shows a very similar trend as Figure 2. However, this data goes further, highlighting whether the target was in the United States or abroad, and if the travel plans of the terrorists were disrupted or not. In 2015, the terrorist-related attacks were especially violent, with 19 victims killed.²⁶¹ Despite this high number of victims killed in 2015, it is still less than 1 percent of the number of Americans murdered in 2015, and only 14 percent of the 134 individuals killed in mass shootings.²⁶² Despite these comparisons, terrorism-related incidents and deaths are highly sensitive subjects in the United States after 9/11.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Kurzman. *Muslim-American Involvement*.

²⁶² Ibid.

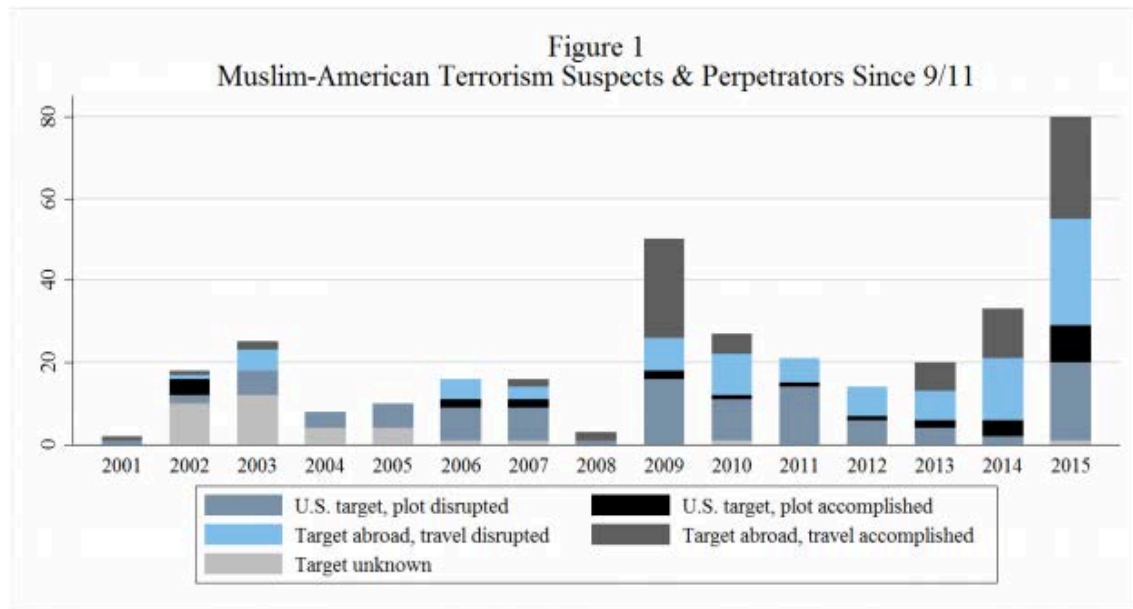


Figure 3. Muslim-American Terrorism Suspects and Perpetrators since 9/11²⁶³

D. NATURE AND SCOPE OF TERRORIST PLOTS/INCIDENTS— MEASURING THE DEFINITION OF RADICALIZATION

The purpose of this section of the analysis is to quantify and measure radicalization in the United States from after 9/11 until September 30, 2016. The data for this analysis comes from New America. It is based on 200 terrorist plots/attacks in the United States and abroad that were either prevented or not prevented for the period immediately following September 11, 2001, to September 30, 2016. This data used in this analysis is a subset of the data used in the previous section but focuses solely on terrorist attacks and plots in the United States.

1. The Number of Terrorist Plots/Incidents in the United States and Its Status

Of the total number of terrorist incidents that has been tracked by New America from 2001, there has been a total of 200 terrorist attacks/incidents, of which only four occurred in a foreign country (see Figure 4). The data shows 195 (98 percent) of the terror plots that occurred or were planned were in the United States of which 150 (84

²⁶³ Source: Kurzman. *Muslim-American Involvement*.

percent) were prevented. Moreover, 25 of the plots or attacks (14 percent) occurred in the United States and could not be prevented. Another 20 percent of the overall plots had no status—therefore, they cannot be labeled as prevented or not in the United States.²⁶⁴

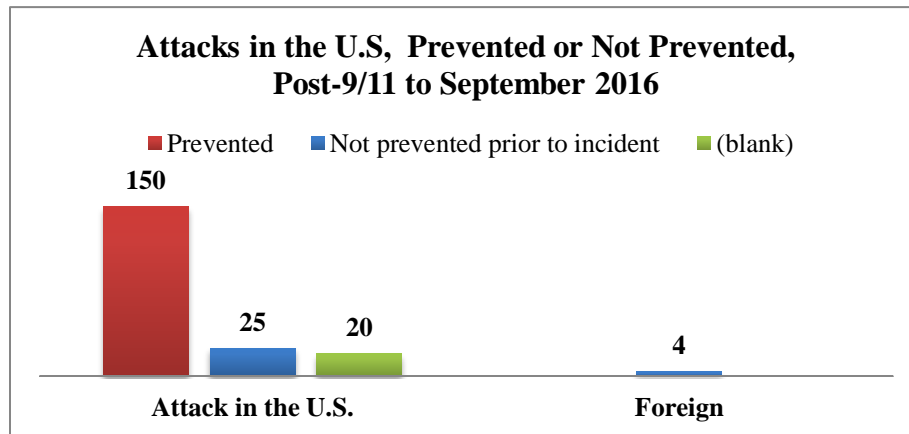


Figure 4. Attacks in the United States after 9/11²⁶⁵

2. Number of Terrorist Plots/Incidents Prevented in the U.S. by Status

Of the 150 attacks that were prevented in the United States from 2001 to date, 31 were based on tips from informants, 16 were militant self-disclosed, 15 were based on community/family tips, 10 were based on routine law enforcement, and 11 by suspected activity reports (see Table 5).²⁶⁶ The majority (42 percent) of the terrorist plots prevented a result of vigilant efforts by community and family, informants, and self-disclosure by militants. Combined, these prevention methods appear to be successful and useful. *Blank* refers to those individuals arrested during this timeframe but the year of the arrest was indicated in the data.

²⁶⁴ New America, “In Depth.”

²⁶⁵ Source: New America, “In Depth.”

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

Table 5. Plot Type (U.S. or Foreign) and whether Prevented or Not Prevented²⁶⁷

Plot Prevented or Not Prevented	U.S. Plot or Attack	Foreign Plot	Grand Total
Plot not prevented prior to the incident	25	4	29
Community/family tip		1	1
Not prevented prior to the incident	23	3	26
(blank)	2		2
Plot prevented	150		150
Community/family tip	15		15
Informant	31		31
Militant self-disclosed	16		16
National Security Agency (NSA) bulk collection under § 215	1		1
NSA surveillance targeting non-U.S. persons under § 702	5		5
NSA surveillance under an unknown authority	3		3
Other non-NSA intelligence provided by CIA, FBI, etc.	11		11
Routine law enforcement	10		10
Suspicious activity report	11		11
Unclear	46		46
(blank)	1		1
(Blank)	20		20
Grand Total	195	4	199

New America and other sources note that Muslim-American informants played an important role in working with the FBI and local law enforcement to foil these plots.²⁶⁸ According to New America, over a quarter of plots planned by Muslim-Americans are

²⁶⁷ Source: New America, “In Depth.”

²⁶⁸ Muslim Public Affairs Council, *Data on Post-9/11 Terrorism*.

foiled by a tip-off from a family member, member of the community, or another eight percent by the general public. In addition, almost half are foiled through the work of informants.²⁶⁹

3. Ideology—Based on Plot or Attack in the United States

Regardless if they were prevented or not, 90 percent of the plots in the United States are associated with jihadist ideologies, 9 percent right-wing ideologies, and one plot with a left-wing ideology. Of the 25 plots and attacks that occurred in the United States for the period of the data set dates, 87 percent of them are jihadist ideology based, and 13 percent on right-wing ideologies. Figure 5, from New America, shows chronologically the terrorist incidents in the United States, the number of victims, and the ideological motivation of the perpetrators. Jihadist attacks ratchet upwards in 2010 with the Fort Hood killings, again in 2013 with the Boston Marathon bombing, and most fatally in 2015, with the Orlando nightclub shooting.

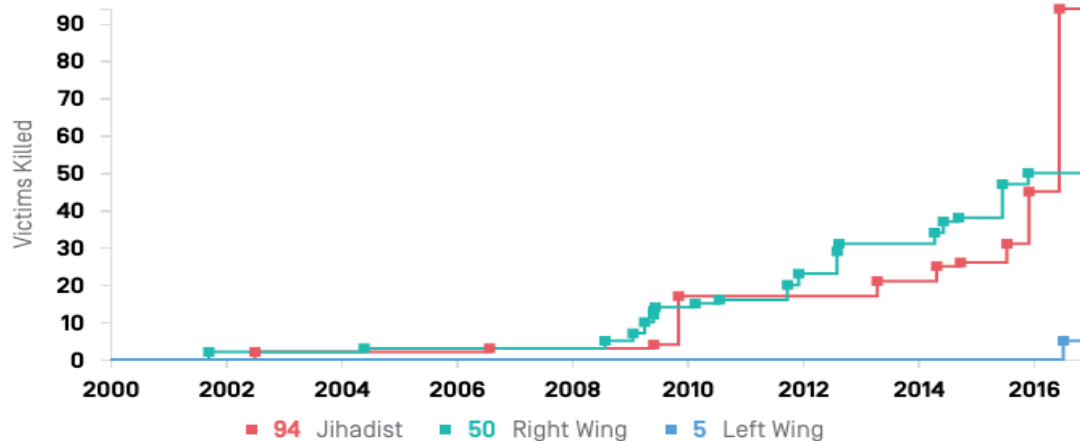


Figure 5. Ideological Motivations of Terrorist in the United States²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ New America, “In Depth: Terrorism in America after 9/11: Part IV, What is the Threat to the United States Today?,” accessed October 15, 2016, <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/terrorism-in-america/what-threat-united-states-today/>.

²⁷⁰ Source: New America, “In Depth: Part V.”

Even though the majority of the attacks are associated with jihadist ideologies, the data does not point to an association with Muslims or Muslim youth. The research by Kurzman is very helpful in remedying this gap and identifies that in 2015 about 66 percent of Muslim-American terrorism suspects were ages 15–24.²⁷¹ Also, a significant number of those arrested are from working-class families, one-third were students, and about 66 percent (two-thirds) were U.S.-born.²⁷²

4. Number of Victims Wounded/Killed in Terrorist Attacks in the United States

Between 2001 and September of 2016, there were 25 attacks in the United States, resulting in 351 victims wounded and 109 victims killed (see Table 6).

Table 6. Plots and Attacks in the U.S. Not Prevented and Victims Wounded and Killed²⁷³

Year and Description of Plot/Attack	# of Victims Wounded	# of Victims Killed
2001 Shoe Bomber Plot	0	0
2002 Los Angeles Airport Shooting	4	2
2006 Seattle Jewish Federation Shooting	5	1
2006 SUV Attack	6	0
2009 Christmas Day Bomb Plot	0	0
2009 Fort Hood Shooting	32	13
2009 Little Rock Shooting	1	1
2010 Northern Virginia Military Shootings	0	0
2010 Times Square Bomb Plot	0	0
2013 Boston Marathon Bombing	170	4
2014 Las Vegas Police Ambush		3
2014 New York Hatchet Attack	2	0

²⁷¹ Kurzman. *Muslim-American Involvement*, 9.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Source: New America, “In Depth.”

Year and Description of Plot/Attack	# of Victims Wounded	# of Victims Killed
2014 Oklahoma Beheading	1	1
2014 Washington and New Jersey Killing Spree		4
2015 Boston Beheading Plot	0	0
2015 Charleston Church Shooting		9
2015 Chattanooga, Tennessee Military Shooting	2	5
2015 Colorado Planned Parenthood Shooting	9	3
2015 Garland, Texas Shooting	1	0
2015 San Bernardino Shooting	21	14
2016 New York City-New Jersey Bombings	31	0
2016 Orlando Night Club Shooting	53	49
2016 Philadelphia Police Shooting	1	0
2016 St. Cloud Mall Stabbing	10	0
2016 Wasil Farooqui	2	0
Grand Total	351	109

The data in Table 6 indicates that the number of terrorist attacks in the United States is becoming more frequent and more violent, based on the number of victims wounded and killed, and more public. Since 9/11, there have been five terrorist attacks in the United States and a total number of 97 victims wounded and 49 killed. The surprise nature of these attacks is concerning, and the majority of the attacks were committed by terrorist who had a jihadist ideology.

E. IS THERE A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISCONNECTION AND RADICALIZATION?

The places that had the highest number of victims killed and wounded (see Table 6) include Boston, Massachusetts; Fort Hood, Texas; New York City/New Jersey; and Orlando, Florida. New York was ranked number 29 out of 51 states for disconnection rates, New Jersey was ranked at number 18, and Florida was ranked the highest at number 38 (Appendix D). However, by comparing the statistics in Table 5 to Appendix

E, we find that at the metropolitan area level, the area of Boston-Cambridge (Massachusetts) and Newton (New Hampshire) was listed third lowest out of 98 areas in terms of disconnection rates; the metropolitan area of Fort Hood-Killeen in Texas is not listed in the data; the New York, Newark (New Jersey), and Jersey City (Pennsylvania) area was listed as 48th; and the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford area in Florida (FL) was listed as 50th.

The data from the START dealing with county-level correlates of terrorism is helpful in refining our understanding. The study by LaFree and Bersani found evidence of terrorism at the county level that terrorist attacks cluster in specific geographic areas.²⁷⁴ Specifically, their findings show that 25 percent of “all attacks occurred in just 10 counties. Manhattan, NY experienced the highest number of attacks during this time (n = 30), followed by Los Angeles County, CA (n = 19), San Diego County, CA (n = 16), Washington, DC (n = 15), and Miami Dade County, FL (n = 14).”²⁷⁵ However, smaller counties such as Bernalillo County, New Mexico, Tulsa County, Oklahoma, and Lane County, Oregon have also been targets of terrorism attacks.²⁷⁶ The START study by LaFree and Bersani offers the following geographic profile of what a “typical” U.S. county looks like that has experienced a terrorist attack for the period 1990–2010:²⁷⁷

- a larger population
- more young men aged 15 to 24 years
- a greater proportion of Asian, Hispanic, and foreign-born residents,
- higher rates of language diversity²⁷⁸

This profile offered by START is extremely helpful in trying to understand all the characteristics that lead to terrorism. However, the study observed a shift in the profile from attacks in the 1990s as compared to those counties that experienced an attack from

²⁷⁴ Gary LaFree and Bianca Bersani, *County-level Correlates of Terrorism in the United States, 1990 to 2010* (College Park, MD: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2013).

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

2001–2010. The researchers explained, “2001 to 2010 had smaller proportions of males aged 15 to 24 years, higher levels of concentrated disadvantage, greater proportions of foreign-born citizens, and higher rates of language diversity.”²⁷⁹ The study is careful not to suggest that terrorist attacks are more likely undertaken by youth who are poor, speak a foreign language, and are foreign-born.²⁸⁰

The data offered by START is important and helpful to understanding the characteristics of demographic mixes at the county and metropolitan levels. Since counties exercise greater control over budgets, programs, and social and health services as compared to metropolitan areas, the data is extremely helpful to develop and create effective programs related to the development of language programs, population mixes within the county, and youth development programs. However, we need to also understand the factors that cause disconnection. What are the motivations that led to their radicalization? It is something more than merely being disconnected from education and employment? The following section tries to answer this question, part of the primary research question.

F. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF WHY TERRORISTS RADICALIZE

This qualitative analysis is based on secondary data that serves to supplement the quantitative analysis performed in the previous section to answer the primary question: Are youth in major U.S. metropolitan areas/cities with high rates of disconnection easier targets for ideological radicalization than youth in metropolitan areas with lower disconnection rates?

The secondary qualitative data for this section comes from a variety of data sources, including the GWU Program on Extremism, the Terrorism and Extremist Violence in the United States (TEVUS) database from START at the University of Maryland, and the work of John Mueller at the Ohio State University. This research and data is most relevant to this study because it focuses on terrorism in the United States, and it has context and content applicability, and suitability that is relevant to this study.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

Some of the data is still in development, such as the TEVUS database, and is constantly being updated. This qualitative analysis serves to supplement the quantitative analysis performed in the previous section to answer the primary question: Although other qualitative studies and data exist, such as the work of Jerrold Post, Ehud Sprinzak, and Laurita Denny, who conducted field work and interviews with 35 imprisoned terrorists in 2002.²⁸¹ The information from the Post interviews though very relevant and useful, may have limited contextual relevance and applicability because the subjects were Middle Eastern terrorists whose experiences are very different from youth in a suburb in New Jersey or a town in Virginia radicalized to terrorism.

The following themes are explored through further analysis: risk factors, self-policing, motivations, peer groups and group dynamics, and the role of the internet and social media. The question of whether individuals who live in larger cities or metropolitan areas are more susceptible to radicalization versus less populated areas is one that is inconclusive and requires further examination. This section seeks to do so by providing a context by looking at the reasons why individuals become radicalized. In a July 2015 conference by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), under the auspice of the Department of Justice, researchers identified the following facilitators of radicalization:

Connections with violent extremists in an individual's social network, identity processes, violent extremist belief systems and narratives, group dynamics, connections with violent extremists and violent extremist material via the internet and social media, grievances, search for meaning, threats or perceived threats, triggering events, and activities to demonstrate commitment.²⁸²

²⁸¹ Post, Sprinzak, and Denny used semi-structured interviews in their research study to gather data through interviews with 35 imprisoned terrorists from the Middle East in 2002. The terrorists who were interviewed “included 21 terrorists from Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hizballah, and 14 from Fatah and its military wing.” According to the authors, the “primary purpose of the research was to understand the psychology, and decision making, in general, with special reference to their propensity towards weapons of mass destruction.” Jerrold M. Post, Ehud Sprinzak, and Laurita M. Denny, “The Terrorist in Their Own Words: Interviews with 35 Incarcerated Middle Eastern Terrorists,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 15, no. 1 (2003): 171–184, <http://www.pol-psych.com/downloads/Terrorists%20in%20Own%20Words%20Terr%20and%20Pol%20violence.pdf>.

²⁸² National Institute of Justice, *Radicalization and Violent Extremism: Lessons Learned from Canada, the U.K. and the U.S.* (Arlington, VA: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, 2015), <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249947.pdf>.

Researchers at the conferences also noted that one of the most common facilitators of radicalization is having “family members, friends or associates involved in violent extremism.”²⁸³ Another facilitator, especially in the area of youth radicalization, is identity process, particularly among second and third generation youth who struggle with being both a Muslim and an American. According to Kurzman, the issue of “Muslim-American identity” is an important facilitator of radicalization that will be discussed further.²⁸⁴ These facilitators of violent extremism are extremely important in informing our understanding of why individuals radicalize to violent extremism. Moreover, they may vary from individual to individual terrorist but are the most common facilitators of radicalization. The next section highlights some of the potential risk factors why individuals in the U.K., Canada and the United States radicalize to violent extremism.

1. Potential Risk Factors Associated with Radicalization

Preliminary findings from START’s Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) Project highlights several risk factors of radicalization note “group dynamics, ideological factors, relationships with other extremists, and platonic or romantic relationship troubles were common among all extremists groups” including far right, far left, and Islamist extremist.²⁸⁵ However, among Islamist extremists, START identified “demographic factors—such as being between 18 and 28 years of age, not married, and/or not closely integrated into U.S. society—were related to the use of violence as well as having been abused and having a criminal history.”²⁸⁶ These finding are consistent with the demographic profile data related to those arrested for terrorism-related charges outlined in Section C of this chapter.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Kurzman, Schanzer, and Moosa, “Muslim-American Terrorism,” 479.

²⁸⁵ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, *Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States: Preliminary Findings* (Washington, DC: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2015), http://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/publications/local_attachments/START_PIRUSResearchBrief_Oct2015.pdf.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

Other risk factors associated with violent extremist that came out of the NIJ conference is listed in Table 8. A risk factor is defined by Department of Justice 2015 report as the “something that increases the likelihood that someone will radicalize to violent extremism” whereas a protective factor is something that reduces that likelihood.²⁸⁷ It was noted by the researchers of the report that the absence of protective factors increases the likelihood of violent outcomes, whereas the presence of protective factors reduces the likelihood of violence.²⁸⁸ Since these factors were not scientifically tested, its validity remains unclear. Despite this shortcoming, Tables 7 and 8 provide a useful listing of both the risk-inducing and risk-reducing factors that should be identified and understood to develop meaningful counter strategies. These risk and protective factors are not meant to be a laundry list of items or a checklist to show cause and effect; however, they can serve as actionable items to develop a framework to develop effective counter strategies aimed at reducing the likelihood of risk while understanding their context and limitations. Protective factors as outlined in Table 8 should be encouraged and strengthen while also seeking and identifying new ones to expand and to grow to counter the risk factors in Table 7.

Table 7. Potential Risk Factors for Individuals Radicalizing to Violent Extremism²⁸⁹

	RISK FACTOR	MAY RESULT IN A PERSON
Individual Factors	Experiencing identity conflict	Being attracted to a belief system that purports to have all of the answers.
	Feeling there is a lack of meaning in life	Being attracted to a belief system that purports to have all of the answers.
	Wanting status	Being drawn to opportunities to prove oneself to be heroic, brave and strong.
	Wanting to belong	Being drawn to joining a tight-knit group.
	Desiring action or adventure	Being drawn to participating in dangerous, illegal and/or violent activity.

²⁸⁷ National Institute of Justice, *Radicalization and Violent Extremism*, 8.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 8.

²⁸⁹ Adapted from National Institute of Justice, *Radicalization and Violent Extremism*, 9.

	RISK FACTOR	MAY RESULT IN A PERSON
	Having experienced trauma*	Being vulnerable to those who promise recompense or revenge.
	Having mental health issues or being emotionally unstable/troubled	Being vulnerable to others' influence.
	Being naïve or having little knowledge of religion and ideology	Being open to fringe religious and ideological interpretations.
	Having strong religious beliefs	Being drawn to those who claim to be guided by religion.
	Having grievances	Being drawn to those who promise to address these grievances.
	Feeling under threat	Being open to engaging in activities that purport to remove this threat.
	Having an "us versus them" world view	Being ready to view those outside one's group as enemies.
	Justifying violence or illegal activity as a solution to problems*	Being open to joining with those who engage in violence and illegal activity.
	Having engaged in previous criminal activity*	Being open to joining with those who engage in illegal activity and justify it as part of a greater mission.
Contextual Factors	Stressors (e.g., a family crisis, being fired from a job)	Being drawn to explanations that blame others for one's situation.
	Societal discrimination or injustice	Being drawn to those who promise recompense or revenge against those who discriminate or oppress.
	Exposure to violent extremist groups or individuals	Viewing violent extremists as less extreme.
	Exposure to violent extremist belief systems or narratives	Viewing violent extremist belief systems and narratives as less extreme.
	Family members or others in violent extremist network*	Identifying with violent extremists and viewing them as less extreme.

*Risk factor was identified by comparing individuals who did and did not engage in extremist violence.

Table 8. Potential Protective Factors against Individuals Radicalizing to Violent Extremism²⁹⁰

	PROTECTIVE FACTOR	MAY RESULT IN A PERSON
Individual Factors	Having self-esteem	Being confident in one's own views and less likely to be easily influenced by others.
	Having strong ties in the community*	Feeling one is a member of a community and has someplace to turn when facing difficulties.
	Having a nuanced understanding of religion and ideology	Being less accepting of religious or ideological interpretations that are simplistic or dogmatic.
Contextual Factors	Parental involvement in an individual's life	Feeling one's family is present, cares and is ready to help in times of difficulty.
	Exposure to nonviolent belief systems and narratives	Being able to identify a range of alternatives to violent belief systems and narratives.
	A diversity of nonviolent outlets for addressing grievances	Feeling one's grievances are acknowledged and respected as well as believing in the possibility of their being resolved in a lawful manner.
	Societal inclusion and integration	Feeling one's group is a valued member of society and is treated fairly.
	Resources to address trauma and mental health issues	Feeling that help is available when facing cognitive and emotional difficulties.

*Protective factor was identified by comparing individuals who did and did not endorse extremist violence.

2. Self-Policing and Community Safeguarding

The number of arrests that lead to the prevention of terrorism in the United States does not happen in a vacuum, as has been shown in Section C. Muslim Americans are playing an important role in policing their communities and reporting terrorism-related activities to law enforcement. In his research Kurzman found that “Muslim-Americans are engaged in a heightened level of self-policing against radicalization that may help to

²⁹⁰ Adapted from National Institute of Justice, *Radicalization and Violent Extremism*, 10.

account for the infrequency of terrorist activities by Muslim-Americans.”²⁹¹ Below are some narratives of community involvement when it comes to radicalization.

In Houston, for example, a Muslim religious leader harshly scolded a man who “told me that he would’ve been proud if it was his sons [who were responsible for 9/11].”²⁹²

In North Carolina, another religious leader said he called the FBI when a young man in the community appeared to be on the verge of violence: “I reached the point where I felt, I have to report this to the authorities, because if, Allah forbid, if he left and did something, even just harming himself, I would be liable before Allah, why didn’t I tell the authorities so that they could stop him.”²⁹³

Another man said he called the authorities when a friend of his started talking angrily about possibly avenging civilian casualties in Iraq: “He was talking about how bridges are going to be blown up into the sky, and stuff, and I was really thinking, somebody is going to do something like this, the way this friend of mine was talking. I was suspicious of the way he was talking with me. I called the FBI myself, and I told them this person, this name, this telephone number. . . . The way he talked, it wasn’t comfortable for me.”²⁹⁴

Also, family members have played an important role in reporting other families suspected of involvement in terrorism-related activities especially, when they were missing overseas, for example,

Omar Hammami, who traveled to Somalia and joined al-Shabaab in 2006; the Somali-Americans in Minnesota who left for Somalia in 2007 and 2008; and five young men from Northern Virginia who traveled to Pakistan in 2009.²⁹⁵

These narrative are in total contrast to the Post interviews in which families encouraged and played a pivotal role in the radicalization process while in other instances they were at least supportive.²⁹⁶

²⁹¹ Kurzman, Schanzer, and Moosa, “Muslim-American Terrorism,” 479.

²⁹² Ibid., 475.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 467.

²⁹⁶ Post, Sprinzak, and Denny, “The Terrorist in Their Own Words.”

3. Motivation for Radicalization to Violent Extremism

In the case studies collected by John Mueller, motivations for why individuals are radicalized to violent extremism are described. The overwhelming driving force as to why individuals radicalized, and were involved in terrorism was a sense anger at U.S. foreign policy.²⁹⁷ This includes America's role in Afghanistan and Iraq, its support for Israel, and the overall lingering Palestinian conflict.²⁹⁸ This motivation highlighted by Mueller is consistent with some of the themes this thesis explored in Chapter II and is consistent with the work of Martha Crenshaw.

4. Peer Groups and Group Dynamics

Researcher at the NIJ conference noted,

Belonging to a tight-knit group was linked to individuals being more likely to accept their fellow group members' views, more likely to consider those inside their group more positively (in-group favoritism), and more likely to consider those outside their group more negatively (outgroup derogation).²⁹⁹

Those who are being radicalized detach them from their previous lives to attach and align their identity to the new group. Western youth being radicalized are more accepting of differences of group members and seemed to coalesce around a common ideology where it is "us" versus "them."³⁰⁰ The common enemy is the United States and other Western governments; they serve as a unifier strengthening the bond among and between those being radicalized.

5. The Role of the Internet and Social Media

From a Western standpoint, the role of the internet and social media cannot be overemphasized as it relates to facilitating the radicalization process. The internet provides a forum in which individuals can view, read, and be exposure to radical ideas,

²⁹⁷ Mueller, *Terrorism Since 9/11*, 10.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 10.

²⁹⁹ National Institute of Justice, *Radicalization and Violent Extremism*, 5.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

see terrorism violence, and have contact with extremists by the click of a button or with a tweet. More than 50 percent of the NIJ conference researchers that participated noted,

In addition to potentially leading individuals to become more accepting of violence and fostering feelings of closeness with those who perpetrate it, virtual connections can provide individuals with practical guidance that may facilitate extremist violence.³⁰¹

...connections via social media may also lead individuals to see similarities between themselves and those currently engaged in violence, and some may experience this as empowering.³⁰²

Even though social media is used as propaganda tool, it remains an effective medium of communication with low risk to those doing the recruiting and its power and potency cannot be denied or ignored. Researchers at the GWU Program on Extremism in their study explain,

Social media plays a crucial role in the radicalization and, at times, mobilization of U.S.-based ISIS sympathizers. The Program on Extremism has identified some 300 American and/or U.S.-based ISIS sympathizers active on social media, spreading propaganda, and interacting with like-minded individuals. Some members of this online echo chamber eventually make the leap from keyboard warriors to actual militancy.³⁰³

American ISIS sympathizers are particularly active on Twitter, where they spasmodically create accounts that often get suspended in a never-ending cat-and-mouse game. Some accounts (the “nodes”) are the generators of primary content, some (the “amplifiers”) just retweet material, others (the “shout-outs”) promote newly created accounts of suspended users.³⁰⁴

G. A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF TERRORIST INCIDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

For this section of the analysis, the thesis has reviewed the extensive work of John Mueller on all the cases that have come to light of Islamist extremist terrorism since 9/11, whether based in the United States or abroad, in which the United States itself has been

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid., 6.

³⁰³ Vidino and Hughes, *ISIS in America*, ix.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

or apparently has been targeted. Table 9 lists the individual attributes associated with the risk factors to radicalization.³⁰⁵

Table 9. List of Relevant Individual Attributes Associated with Terrorists in the U.S. Tally of Cases/Individuals Based on a Review of the Mueller Research³⁰⁶

<u>Money and Greed</u> Money (12)
<u>Mental Health/Psychological Issues</u> Anger (20) Aggression (6) Mental health (5) Depression and schizophrenia (5) Drug and alcohol use (6)
<u>Hatred Towards Israel and the U.S.</u> Hatred (13) Martyrdom and personal sacrifice (19) Commit violence (9)
<u>Identity Conflict/Crisis (10)</u> Socially marginalized (10) Gullible or suggestible (4) Malleable (3) Emotionally immature (4) Confused identity (8) Isolation (18)
<u>Personal Grievances (17)</u> Assignment of blame (others, U.S. Government, Israel, military) (11)
<u>Societal discrimination or injustice</u> Injustice (9) Discrimination (4)
<u>Criminal Record</u> Previous criminal record (3)

³⁰⁵ Mueller, *Terrorism Since 9/11*, 10.

³⁰⁶ Adapted from Mueller, *Terrorism Since 9/11*, 10.

<u>Violent Extremist Ideology</u> Jihadist ideology (43)
<u>Family members or others in violent extremist network</u> Family influence on terrorism (3)
<u>Stressors</u> Divorce (self or parents) (14) Unemployed (6)
<u>Other Characteristics</u> Lonely (6) Quiet (10) Religion (43)

Religion surfaces in these cases prominently as playing a significant role in the radicalized process. They were devoted to their religion, were at the mosque regularly, and recruited or attempted to recruit others. In the cases reviewed by Mueller, many of the individuals who had criminal records and were in prison but converted to Islam found a sense of discipline and stability in their lives that facilitated in the radicalize process. This is the case with Richard Reid (2001 Shoe Bomber), Jose Padilla (2002 Padilla Plot), Kevin James, and Levar Washington (2005 Folsom Prison Plot).³⁰⁷ Many of those converted to Islam had a poor understanding of the religion, and as a result, they were easily influenced and malleable. This is the case with Shahawar Matin Siraj and James Elshafa, 22- and 19-year-olds, respectively (involved in the 2004 Herald Square Bomb Plot), who both had mental issues, were extremely malleable, and easily influenced.

Some of the attributes revolved around the theme of soldiers and war. The four terrorist involved in the Jama'at Ul-Islami As Sahih (JIS) plot regarded themselves as warriors who were fighting a global war, and they believed they were involved with a massive clash of civilization. Another theme that surfaced around the issue of social alienation and loneliness. Attributes around this theme includes feeling like a social outcast and looking for social solidarity. Hamid Hayat, the 19-year-old who was arrested

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

in Lodi, California, and Taheri-Azar, the 22-year-old University of North Carolina student, were both introverts who lacked strong social skills. It was also the case with the six Lackawana boys; they lacked social skills, experienced identity conflict by being both Muslims and Americans. Additionally, they were searching for guidance and meaning. Similarly, 22-year-old Ahmed Omar Abu Ali experienced alienation. Shahawar Matin Siraj and James Elshafa, 22- and 19-year-olds, respectively, also experienced alienation and felt socially marginalized.³⁰⁸ A theme that seems to emerge from the data is that that younger terrorists experienced social marginalization and alienation more than older terrorists; however, further research is required to explore this. The data shows that lack of educational attainment is not a key factor in why individuals are radicalized. Fifty-five percent of the cases researched by Mueller indicate the terrorist had a college education (completed or attended), or had completed high school. Also, 17 percent were college dropouts. In almost all of the cases, money was one of the least motivating factors. As has been hypothesized in this thesis, educational attainment and youth has no connection to why individuals become radicalized.

Some of the other themes that emerged as a result of the attributes in Table 9 include U.S. foreign policy, hatred towards Israel, the discrimination and general perceived oppression that Muslims suffer, mental and emotional problems, alienation and social marginalization.³⁰⁹

1. A Representative Sampling of Terrorist Cases in the United States

The following section provides a representative sample of various terrorist related cases in the United States to reinforce some of the individual attributes outlined in Table 9.

a. 2001 Shoe Bomber Plot

Richard Reid, a 22-year old British citizen, attempted to blow up an American Airlines flight from Paris bound for Miami; however, he was subdued by passengers and

³⁰⁸ Ibid

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

flight attendants before he could detonate the bomb.³¹⁰ Reid's parents divorced when he was 11 years old, and he was a high school dropout. In addition, he had a criminal background and had converted to Islam while in prison.³¹¹ Reid was constantly searching for identity and gravitated toward a life of crime³¹² Mueller notes, "converting to Islam helped Reid identify a sense of identity and community that he was lacking."³¹³ The reasons for Reid's radicalization was justice and the U.S. involvement in the Middle East.

b. 2006 SUV Attack

Mohammed Taheri-Azar, a 22-year-old immigrant from Tehran, Iran, was an introvert with poor social skills.³¹⁴ He was intensely religious and had read the Koran 20 times. In addition, he believed and practiced a version of Islam adapted to his own ideology and set of beliefs.³¹⁵ Below is an excerpt from John's Mueller's book to underscore the lack of remorse portrayed by Taheri-Azar.

On March 3, 2006, a young Iranian-American man, a recent graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, returned to his alma mater in a rented Jeep Grand Cherokee equipped with four-wheel drive, drove to a central assembly area, and tried to run over as many of this former fellow students as he could. He injured nine on his rampage, none seriously, killed no one, and then drove off a short distance, parked, dialed 911 on his cell phone, and calmly told the operator, "Sir, I just hit several people with a vehicle....You can come and arrest me now." Asked why he had done this, he replied, "Really, it's to punish the government of the United States for their actions around the world."³¹⁶

c. 2012 Capitol Bomber

Sidi Mohamed Amine El Khalif, a 29-year old illegal immigrant from Morocco, overstated his visa by 12 years. Additionally, he was involved in drugs and had a criminal

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid., 42.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 259.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

record. He planned to take down the dome of the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, DC. El Khalif did not hide his extremist views and used Facebook and other forms of social media to express them.³¹⁷ Moreover, he saw himself as a martyr and was interested in his family receiving martyrdom payments after his death.³¹⁸ Since his parents were struggling financially, it is apparent that money was the chief motivator even though El Khalif held deep and personal religious beliefs.³¹⁹

d. 2015 Chattanooga, Tennessee Military Shooting

According to CNN, “Mohammad Abdulazeez opened fire on a military recruiting center and then drove seven miles away to a Navy reserve facility, where he shot and killed four U.S. Marines and a sailor.”³²⁰ He was a 24-year-old who was inspired by and espoused a jihadist ideology. He graduated from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga with an engineering degree but failed a background check as part of a job requirement to work on a federally owned utility.³²¹ In this case, Abdulazeez shows some of the same themes and characteristics discussed above. He was young, educated, and had adopted a jihadist ideology. It appears to have acted alone. It is unclear what the motivations for the attacks were—if it was directed at individuals in the military because of what it represents or because he failed a federal background check and the government was the target. He could have been a “frustrated achiever,” whose prospects for a job fell through with very little hope. Violence and mass destruction is evident in this attack.³²²

e. 2016 Dallas Police Shooting

The person responsible for the 2016 Dallas shooting was 25-year-old African American, Micah Xavier Johnson, who killed five police officers. He had “pledged

³¹⁷ Ibid., 712.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 714.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 708.

³²⁰ Kristina Sgueglia, “Chattanooga Shootings ‘Inspired’ by Terrorists, FBI Chief Says,” CNN, December 16, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/16/us/chattanooga-shooting-terrorist-inspiration/>.

³²¹ Shirley Bradbury, “Who was Mohammad Youssef Abdulazeez?” *Time Free Press*, July 17, 2015, <http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/local/story/2015/jul/17/who-wmohammad-youssef-abdulazeez/315079/>.

³²² Post, Sprinzak, and Denny, “The Terrorist in Their Own Words.”

support to the New Black Panther Party, a group that has advocated violence against whites, and Jews in particular.”³²³ Johnson was considered to be a recluse. He had had no criminal record. He also had a military service record. Reportedly, he “was upset by the Black Lives Matter movement, the shootings in Louisiana and Minnesota.”³²⁴ In this attack, the themes that emerge is that Johnson was young; he adopted a right wing ideology, and he appears to have acted alone.

2. Primary Research Question: Can We Prove It?

This study sought to answer the following question: Are youth in major U.S. metropolitan areas/cities with high rates of disconnection easier targets for ideological radicalization than youth in metropolitan areas with lower disconnection rates? As data was not available at the metropolitan level, data was substituted at the county level, which may be a better area of consideration. The START study did find that “counties with a higher proportion of young men aged 15–24 had higher rates of terrorism in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century; however, this variable was not significant when included in the multivariate models.”³²⁵ Also, the motivations and drivers of radicalization are varied and many. Education and employment are not the predominant reason for why youth become radicalized to terrorist groups. The issue of “frustrated achievers” is one that provides a plausible explanation, but it requires further examination and research. It is unclear if relative deprivation as a framework, explain why individuals resort to terrorism but it does provide a basis for research to understand which societal and environmental factors are most impactful.

3. Secondary Research Question

Which societal factors and influencers are the leading causes of radicalization among youth in metropolitan areas with high rates of disconnection? Even though data

³²³ Manny Fernandez et al., “Five Dallas Officers Were Killed as Payback, Police Chief Says,” *New York Times*, July 8, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/09/us/dallas-police-shooting.html>.

³²⁴ Aaron Morrison, “Everything We Know about Micah Johnson, the Dallas Police Shooting Suspect,” *News Mic*, July 8, 2016, <https://mic.com/articles/148212/everything-we-know-about-micah-johnson-the-dallas-police-shooting-suspect>.

³²⁵ LaFree and Bianca Bersani, *County-level Correlates*.

was not available at the metropolitan level, data was substituted at the county level, which may be a better area of consideration. Based on the research and the analysis of the data, there is no one particular set of factors, such as race and religion that can be singled out as a leading cause of radicalization. Race and religion do not appear to be factors in radicalization. Despite the fact that African American youth are disproportionately unemployed, underemployed, and not enrolled in education relative to other racial groups, they are no more likely than American youth from other racial groups to be radicalized to terrorism. Factors such as language diversity, higher rates of residential instability, and high rates of foreign born populations are more closely associated with terrorism at the local level. This requires further research.

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VI. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This world demands the qualities of youth: not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease.

Robert Kennedy

A. FINDINGS: WHAT DID WE LEARN AND WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT YOUTH DISCONNECTION AND RADICALIZATION

There is no single theory or definition of radicalization in the literature. Individuals, particularly youth, radicalize to terrorism for different reasons and motivations. The influencers and root causes of youth radicalization occur on many levels and include social, cultural, economic, political, educational causes. This research's primary focus has been young people (ages 16 to 24 who are not employed and not enrolled in education) living in metropolitan areas with high rates of disconnection and their likelihood of radicalization as compared to youth who live in metropolitan areas with lower rates of disconnection. Theories such as relative deprivation, social movement theory, social distance theory, consolidated inequality theory, and psychological frameworks are outlined to understand the motivations for radicalization. Disconnection as an occurrence is explored through the prism of education, unemployment, underemployment, and employment to examine root causes as is how they diverge and intersect at a macro level. This research confirms the finding from other research studies that radicalized youth and individuals and those involved in terrorism do not necessarily lack education or come from low income family backgrounds. One of the central themes for future research emerging from this research is the concept of "frustrated achiever" and how it may affect youth with education and without education in terms of radicalization.

The study confirms previous research on radicalization that how it occurs at the individual and group is a highly personal and complex process. Disconnection as a framework for understanding how and why youth radicalizes establishes a basis for

current actions and strategies. It also provides a basis for further research in this area of study. Disconnection has larger impacts than mere lack of education and employment of youth. It involves youth disconnecting from families, cultural and psychological alienation, lack of political and economic participation, all of which lead to a sense of apathy and frustration.

Disconnection in a larger context could serve as a basis for future research to empirically validate the extent to which socioeconomic and social psychological causes correlate to terrorist violence as an outcome. Youth are searching for identity, and disconnection indicates that they are searching outside of the normal societal structures of work and school. In the search for a social identity what they are disconnected from can guide them into particular forms of violent behavior and groups. Such hypotheses are reserved for future evaluation. However, future research should also focus on the dynamic interpersonal struggles youth go through in becoming radicalized to terrorism. The at-risk factors associated with youth delinquency (outlined in Table 1) can serve as a helpful framework for exploring future research in this regard because this framework highlights the interdependence at the individual, family, peer, and school (community) domains. The framework offered by these characteristics and variables suggest a possible theoretical basis for understanding the factors leading to radicalization.

The methodology outlined in Chapter V to analyze the data reveals that the issue of radicalization is not a problem of “foreign fighters” who are returning from Syria and Iraq, it is individuals radicalized in the United States and already living here. The average age of those arrested for terrorism-related plots was 29 years, and they were overwhelmingly male. Slightly more than 75 percent of those arrested were either U.S.-born or naturalized citizens. The places or states of residency with the highest percent of arrests included New York, Minnesota, Virginia, California, and Florida. Based on the number of terrorism-related arrests, the number of terrorism-related incidents or plots is also on the rise. Furthermore, the number of terrorism-related attacks over the last two years are have become deadlier, as shown by the number of victims wounded and killed as well as the terrorists involved in shoot-outs with police and law-enforcement.

The research finds that youth in large metropolitan areas with high rates of disconnection are at no greater risk of radicalization than young people in large urban areas with lower levels of disconnection. Despite what we see and hear reported in the media, data shows that that youth are no more or less likely to be radicalized to commit political violence. There are no predictive models or frameworks of radicalization or terrorism to help inform us who or when individuals are targets or primed for radicalization. However, the literature provides rich theoretical frameworks and processes for understanding the underlying societal, economic, political, cultural, and environmental factors that serve as indicators or root causes regardless if it is the United States, Western Europe, Moslem countries, or elsewhere.

It is clear from the literature that group identity and perceptions of marginalization of one's group can play important roles in radicalization.³²⁶ As noted earlier, McCauley and Moskalenko consider "political radicalization as change in beliefs, feelings, and action toward support and sacrifice for intergroup conflict."³²⁷ Individuals, groups, and masses can become radicalized in a number of different ways, but the key idea is that all radicalization, other than of a "lone wolf," entails prior identification with a group that views itself in conflict with another group(s).³²⁸ For youth who are minorities, this may mean their primary identification becomes one that is opposed to some group that is perceived to do them and their fellow group members harm or to be essentially immoral.³²⁹

In considering radicalization to terrorist groups, when combining insights from the existing literature, it appears that a collective anger based on perceived injustices to and alienation of one's group may be a source of radicalization. For example, Fathali Moghaddam notes, "rapid globalization has forced disparate cultures into contact with one another and is threatening the domination or disappearance of some groups—a

³²⁶ Gartenstein-Ross and Laura Grossman, *Homegrown Terrorists*, 1; Sageman, "A Strategy for Fighting," 618; Horgan, *Leaving Terrorism Behind*; Denoeux and Carter, *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*.

³²⁷ McCauley and Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization," 415–433.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

cultural version of ‘survival of the fittest.’”³³⁰ Moghaddam asserts that it is psychological perceptions that guide behavior, and he uses the phrase “perceived deprivation” to express the “psychological phenomenon by which an individual feel that he, and his fellow members of an ethnic, religious, political or even professional group do not have the same advantages as those from other groups.”³³¹ It is this aspect of threat to one’s perceived group that leads to radicalization because the deprivation experienced cannot continue to run its course. Some form of action is needed, and some consider terrorism as the only viable response. These characteristics also align with some of the definitions of radicalization discussed above in that terrorists have a grievance. They had a shared set of beliefs and based on a collective identity and often see violence as the only viable and acceptable option.

Drawing on Crenshaw’s work and the theories of relative deprivation and social mobilization and the empirical findings that most terrorists in the United States are middle class and act on behalf of a kindred group, I offer up for future research the concept of “representative” radicalism or terrorism to capture the logic of “frustrated achievers” and extend the argument that disconnection leads to radicalization. In this view, relatively well-connected youth are radicalized act *on behalf of* their self-identified reference group(s)—those who are perceived to be marginalized because of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and lack of economic opportunity. Tunisia is a case in point—the country “has a stronger middle class and education system than most of the Middle East, and it has a disproportionately high number of individuals joining ISIS.”³³² The Arab Spring in 2011 started in Tunisia when a young male fruit seller immolated himself because of his lack of economic opportunity and his disparagement by

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Holly F. Young, Frederike Zwenk, and Magda Rooze, *A Review of the Literature on Radicalization; and What It Means for TERRA* (Netherlands: TerRa Terrorism and Radicalization, 2013), <http://www.terra-net.eu/files/publications/20140227160036Literature%20review%20incl%20cover%20in%20color.pdf>, 16.

³³² Taşpınar, “You Can’t Understand Why People.”

authorities.³³³ That act symbolized the hopelessness and lack of upward mobility many young people in the Arab world feel.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations provided below provide an actionable list of options, which can serve as a platform for understanding and recognizing the problem of radicalization and tackling it at the strategic, tactical and operational levels. Youth today are tomorrow's adults. They hold the key of future success. They have an active role and contribution to make from a social, economic, and political standpoint. Denying them such an opportunity by not providing them access and resources to education and employments impacts their future. This leaves them disconnected, deprived, vulnerable to negative influences, and potentially vulnerable to radicalization.

The recommendations of this thesis are listed not in order of importance but in order of action needed for consideration. Focused attention is required to address the issue of radicalization of youth and should consist of integration points at various levels within the United States. Despite the fact that this study did not find a relationship between youth disconnection and radicalization in large metropolitan areas, it does not preclude this from becoming an issue in the future. Indeed, future research on "frustrated achievers" and representative radicalism may find such a linkage.

Recommendation 1: Explore ways to engage second-generation Muslim youth to be more self-aware of their cultural identities while still being Americans and without sacrificing one in lieu of the other.

The data shows that a significant number of individuals adopted a jihadist ideology. More practical research and methods of exploration are needed to assist second generation youth to have a healthy disposition and balance between their cultural identity and their American identity. These two forms of self-expression are not competing ones but inextricably linked to who they are. The identities of second generation youth are very different from their parents' identities. Moreover, second-generation Muslim youth

³³³ Filipe R. Campante, and Davin Chor, "Why Was the Arab World Poised for Revolution? Schooling, Economic Opportunities, and the Arab Spring," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 26, no. 2 (2012): 167–188, doi: 10.1257/jep.26.2.167.

often have very little connection (from a cultural or language standpoint) to their parents' birth country. Often, they cannot identify with it. However, second generation youth also feel somewhat left out and cannot always fit into the American culture. They may feel they are "outsiders," and this may lead to frustration and alienation, which can result in radicalization. Schools, colleges, social, cultural, sports, and welfare organizations should be mindful of this and try to bridge this gap to break down any barriers that may cause such duality or conflict.

Recommendation 2: Create, establish, and implement a multipronged approach at the city/county (operational level), metropolitan area (tactical level), state (strategic level), and the federal government level (ownership level) to tackle the issue of radicalization.

This recommendation underscores the fact that radicalization, but especially youth radicalization, requires a fusion of cooperation, effort, and common ground at all levels. Local, state, and federal agencies should be pursue and foster a consensus to tackle radicalization as a societal issue. Radicalization is as much a local issue as it is a state and national issue. A clear understanding among all stakeholders is needed to develop fundamental and strategic approaches to tackling the problem. Role clarification by each stakeholder should be the basis of this recommended multipronged approach to ensure programs, strategies, and guidance is clear and has buy-in from local community leaders and key influencers. Part of the multipronged approach is to seek consensus and understanding on definitional and usage of terms and concepts. This recommendation also calls for law enforcement agencies to receive awareness training in understanding the psychological and sociological factors and dynamics that give rise to disconnection leading to radicalization.

C. CONCLUSIONS

It should be stressed that radicalization to terrorism is not just the sole result of individuals adopting jihadist ideologies; it is also strongly associated with right wing ideologies and nationalist identity groups, as well as left wing groups. The metaphor of the United States as a melting pot can be one of its greatest strengths, and every effort should be made by policy makers to understand the push and pull factors that lead to

radicalization. The common threads among all these groups should be explored, especially their appeal and the societal factors leading individuals to such groups.

Similar to other countries, the United States is not exempt from youth radicalization to violent terrorism. The literature confirms that Muslim youth who become radicalized do so for various reasons. Some of them are thrill and attention seekers, and some are educated and middle-class. Others are uneducated, poor, and unemployed, and they see themselves as excluded or forgotten. It is clear that more research is needed to understand the relationship between youth identity, discrimination, social integration, and radicalism.

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APPENDIX A. PEOPLE VARIABLES

Table 10. People Variables

Variable Name	Description
person_ID	Identifier for the person
first_name	First name of terrorist
last_name	Last name of terrorist
full_name	Full name and last name combined
Headshot	Picture of terrorist
headshot_credit	Federal government or law enforcement agency credited for the headshot
Gender	Gender of terrorist
Age	Age of terrorist
terror_plot	Terror plot name
terror_plot_2	Terror plot name
plot_ID	Individual ID assigned to plot
citizenship_status	Citizenship status
charged_or_deceased	Was the terrorist charged or deceased
year_charged_or_deceased	Year the terrorist was charged or deceased
date_charged	Date the terrorist was charged
state_charged	First U.S. state the terrorist was charged
state_charged_2	Second U.S. state the terrorist was charged
last_residency_state	Last U.S. state of residency of terrorist
last_residency_country	Last country of residency of terrorist
Gender	Gender
char_awlaki_ties	Ties to Anwar al-Awlaki
char_awlaki_contact	Contact with Anwar al-Awlaki
char_contact_with_foreign_militant	Contact with foreign militants
char_overseas_military_training	Overseas military training received
char_us_military_experience	U.S. military experience

Variable Name	Description
char_online_radicalization	Online radicalization
targeted_jews_israel	Jews or Israel targeted
targeted_military_installation	Military installation targeted

APPENDIX B. TERROR PLOT VARIABLES

Table 11. Terror Plot Variables³³⁴

Variable Name	Description
plot_ID	Unique terrorism plot identifier
Name	Name of plot or incident
Description	Description of plot or incident
foreign_attack	Was the attack foreign or domestic? answer is true or false
victims_wounded	Number of victims wounded
victims_killed	Number of victims killed
Year	Year in which attack occurred
plot_status	Plot status: prevented or not prevented
method_of_prevention	Method of prevention
Ideology	Ideology
legal_1	Legal complaint 1
legal_2	Legal complaint 2
legal_3	Legal complaint 3
legal_4	Legal complaint 4
legal_5	Legal complaint 5
legal_6	Legal complaint 6
array_legal	Reference to legal complaint
source_1	Online source of information 1
source_2	Online source of information 2
source_3	Online source of information 3
source_4	Online source of information 4
source_5	Online source of information 5
source_6	Online source of information 6
array_sources	Reference to online source
id_depreciated	Identifier depreciated

³³⁴ Adapted from New America, “In Depth.”

Variable Name	Description
id_2_depreciated	Identifier depreciated _2
plot_initiation	How was the plot initiated

Note: Not all of the variables listed above contained any data.

APPENDIX C PROFILE DATA OF TERRORIST ARRESTED

Table 12. Breakdown by Age and Gender³³⁵

Number of Terrorists Arrested by Age and Gender Since 9/11			
Age at Time of Arrest	Female	Male	Total
15		1	1
16		1	1
17		3	3
18		11	11
19	2	19	21
20	1	21	22
21		20	20
22		19	19
23		22	22
24	1	24	25
25	1	21	22
26	1	24	25
27		13	13
28	1	12	13
29	2	16	18
30	1	19	20
31	2	9	11
32		12	12
33	1	9	10
34	2	6	8
35	2	9	11
36	1	5	6
37		4	4
38	1	5	6
39	1	3	4
40		5	5
41		1	1
42	1	4	5
43		5	5
44	1	2	3
45		2	2
46	1	1	2
47		2	2
48		1	1
49		2	2
50		2	2
51		1	1
52		2	2
54		1	1
55		1	1
56		1	1
57		1	1
58		1	1
63	1	1	2
65		1	1
68		2	2
76		1	1
Blank	1	13	14
	25	361	386

Source: In Depth Terrorism in America After 9/11, New America

³³⁵ Source: New America, "In Depth."

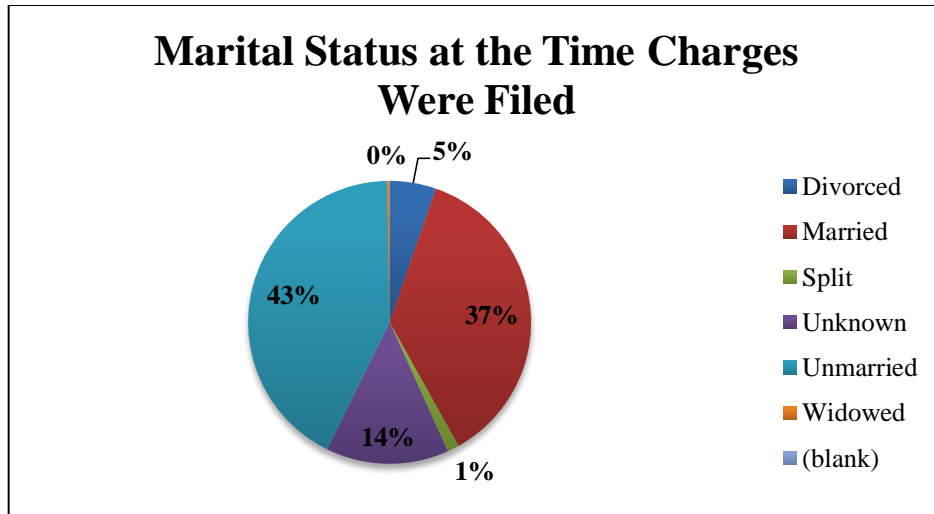


Figure 6. Breakdown by Marital Status³³⁶

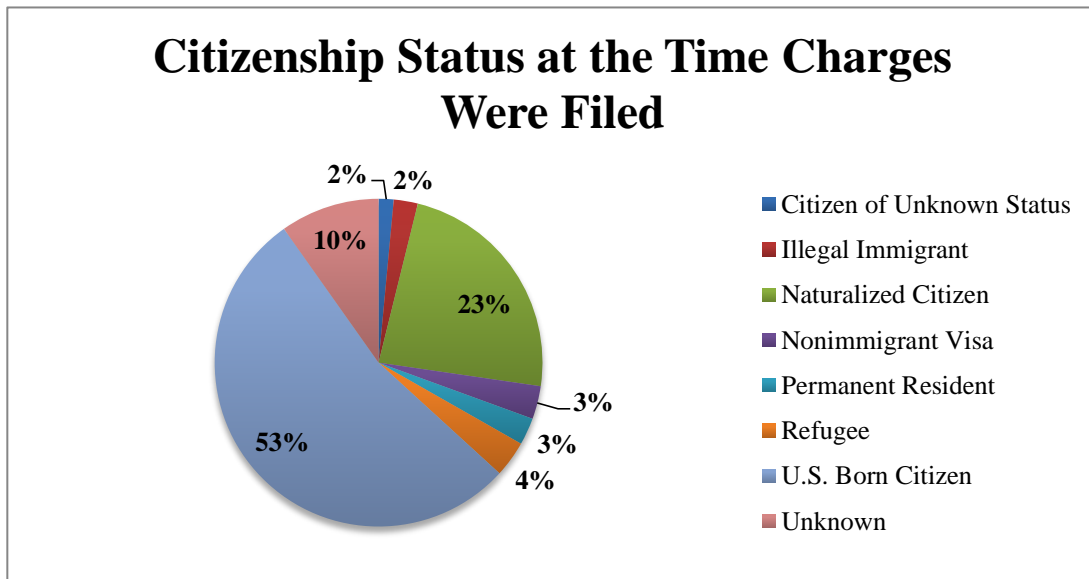


Figure 7. Breakdown by Citizenship Status³³⁷

³³⁶ Source: New America, “In Depth.”

³³⁷ Source: New America, “In Depth.”

APPENDIX D. YOUTH DISCONNECTION DATA BY STATE

Table 13. Youth Disconnection by State³³⁸

Rank	State	Disconnected Youth (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth (# ages 16–24)
	United States	13.8	5,527,000
1	Nebraska	7.6	18,222
2	North Dakota	7.9	8,930
3	Iowa	8.8	34,655
4	Minnesota	8.9	57,352
5	Vermont	8.9	7,257
6	South Dakota	9.4	10,011
7	Kansas	9.4	35,508
8	Wisconsin	9.8	68,181
9	Massachusetts	9.8	84,834
10	Maine	9.8	14,593
11	New Hampshire	10.1	16,428
12	Connecticut	10.6	46,335
13	Utah	11.2	47,522
14	Hawaii	11.5	19,470
15	Colorado	11.5	73,892
16	Wyoming	11.8	8,860
17	Maryland	11.8	85,660
18	New Jersey	12.1	124,877
19	Ohio	12.3	174,132
20	Rhode Island	12.4	18,386
21	Virginia	12.5	129,665
22	Illinois	12.9	207,984
23	Montana	12.9	16,613

³³⁸ Adapted from Kristen Lewis and Sarah Burd-Sharps, *American Human Development Report: The Measure of America 2013–2014* (Agoura Hills, CA: Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, 2014), <http://www.measureofamerica.org/docs/MOA-III-June-18-FINAL.pdf>.

Rank	State	Disconnected Youth (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth (# ages 16–24)
24	Missouri	12.9	96,721
25	Pennsylvania	13.3	208,813
26	Indiana	13.4	113,104
27	Michigan	13.7	173,899
28	California	13.8	699,150
29	New York	13.8	343,699
30	Washington	14.1	118,330
31	Alaska	14.2	14,829
32	North Carolina	14.7	182,377
33	Oregon	14.8	69,090
34	Texas	14.9	521,061
35	Idaho	14.9	30,530
36	Kentucky	15.2	81,850
37	South Carolina	15.2	94,408
38	Florida	15.3	348,366
39	Delaware	15.4	17,055
40	Oklahoma	15.9	78,557
41	Georgia	16.5	215,663
42	Arkansas	16.6	59,976
43	Tennessee	16.6	132,040
44	New Mexico	16.9	46,221
45	Arizona	17.3	146,510
46	Alabama	17.9	110,955
47	District of Columbia	18.3	16,782
48	Nevada	18.5	61,786
49	Mississippi	18.5	74,119
50	West Virginia	19.4	41,838
51	Louisiana	19.8	119,846

APPENDIX E. YOUTH DISCONNECTION DATA BY METROPOLITAN AREA

Table 14. Youth Disconnection by Metro Area³³⁹

Rank	Metro Area	Disconnected Youth (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth (# ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Blacks (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Latinos (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Whites (% ages 16–24)
	United States	13.8	5,527,000	21.6	16.3	11.3
1	Omaha–Council Bluffs, NE–IA	7.7	8,945			6.1
2	Bridgeport–Stamford–Norwalk, CT	7.7	8,207			5.5
3	Boston–Cambridge–Newton, MA–NH	8.2	49,229	9.8	17.3	6.8
4	Minneapolis–St. Paul–Bloomington, MN–WI	9.1	41,494	16.6		7.7
5	Ogden–Clearfield, UT	9.1	9,061			8.0
6	Spokane–Spokane Valley, WA	9.3	7,247			8.7
7	Worcester, MA–CT	9.3	11,220			7.7
8	Wichita, KS	9.6	8,276			7.3
9	San Jose–Sunnyvale–Santa Clara,	9.7	20,242		11.9	6.7

³³⁹ Adapted from Lewis and Burd-Sharps, *American Human Development Report*.

Rank	Metro Area	Disconnected Youth (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth (# ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Blacks (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Latinos (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Whites (% ages 16–24)
	CA					
10	Scranton–Wilkes–Barre–Hazleton, PA	9.7	5,887			9.1
11	Oxnard–Thousand Oaks–Ventura, CA	9.8	10,853		11.1	
12	Syracuse, NY	10.0	11,207			9.8
13	Akron, OH	10.1	9,910			10.2
14	Pittsburgh, PA	10.2	30,575	21.8		9.1
15	Raleigh, NC	10.3	15,621	12.8		
16	Des Moines–West Des Moines, IA	10.3	8,194			8.8
17	Albany–Schenectady–Troy, NY	10.4	13,855			10.8
18	San Francisco–Oakland–Hayward, CA	10.4	50,593	19.4	12.2	9.2
19	Toledo, OH	10.7	9,628			7.7
20	Provo–Orem, UT	10.7	14,445			10.7
21	Milwaukee–Waukesha–West Allis, WI	10.7	20,219	19.9		
22	Springfield, MA	11.0	7,932			11.7
23	Columbus, OH	11.0	30,403	13.2		10.6

Rank	Metro Area	Disconnected Youth (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth (# ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Blacks (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Latinos (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Whites (% ages 16–24)
24	Hartford–West Hartford–East Hartford, CT	11.1	16,909		25.0	6.6
25	Baltimore–Columbia– Towson, MD	11.3	39,864	18.4		7.8
26	Grand Rapids– Wyoming, MI	11.3	18,963			9.6
27	Austin–Round Rock, TX	11.5	27,959	17.8	14.4	8.8
28	Urban Honolulu, HI	11.7	14,834			
29	Dayton, OH	11.8	12,215			9.7
30	Buffalo–Cheektowaga– Niagara Falls, NY	12.0	17,348	20.3		9.0
31	San Diego– Carlsbad, CA	12.1	54,278		13.7	11.0
32	Salt Lake City, UT	12.2	18,812		14.8	11.1
33	Kansas City, MO–KS	12.3	30,795	22.1	12.3	10.1
34	Colorado Springs, CO	12.3	11,186			12.7
35	Seattle– Tacoma– Bellevue, WA	12.4	50,593		16.8	10.8
36	Washington– Arlington– Alexandria, DC–VA–MD– WV	12.4	93,663	20.4	10.3	9.7

Rank	Metro Area	Disconnected Youth (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth (# ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Blacks (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Latinos (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Whites (% ages 16–24)
37	Denver–Aurora–Lakewood, CO	12.5	40,399		16.9	10.4
38	Allentown–Bethlehem–Easton, PA–NJ	12.5	12,034			9.9
39	Chicago–Naperville–Elgin, IL–IN–WI	12.5	147,508	24.5	13.9	7.5
40	Columbia, SC	12.6	14,769	20.6		7.6
41	Los Angeles–Long Beach–Anaheim, CA	12.7	222,396	23.2	14.6	9.0
42	New Haven–Milford, CT	12.8	14,016	24.6	24.2	6.5
43	Nashville–Davidson—Murfreesboro—Franklin, TN	12.8	29,283	17.6		10.4
44	Cincinnati, OH–KY–IN	12.8	38,312	20.6		11.8
45	Providence–Warwick, RI–MA	13.0	28,340		27.2	9.2
46	Virginia Beach–Norfolk–Newport News, VA–NC	13.2	35,271	19.4		10.3
47	Rochester, NY	13.4	21,701	30.8	23.0	9.8
48	New York–	13.5	324,264	21.4	16.4	9.2

Rank	Metro Area	Disconnected Youth (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth (# ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Blacks (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Latinos (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Whites (% ages 16–24)
	Newark– Jersey City, NY–NJ–PA					
49	Dallas–Fort Worth– Arlington, TX	13.6	117,590	21.3	15.9	10.0
50	Orlando– Kissimmee– Sanford, FL	13.6	41,236	22.1	15.5	9.5
51	Cleveland– Elyria, OH	13.6	32,354	24.4	18.3	8.5
52	Boise City, ID	13.7	12,383			11.1
53	Harrisburg– Carlisle, PA	13.8	9,168			
54	Winston– Salem, NC	13.9	10,668			13.0
55	St. Louis, MO–IL	14.0	48,903	20.7		11.6
56	Louisville/Jeff erson County, KY–IN	14.0	21,750	18.5		13.3
57	Houston–The Woodlands– Sugar Land, TX	14.2	114,787	19.1	15.6	11.4
58	Philadelphia– Camden– Wilmington, PA–NJ–DE– MD	14.3	107,246	23.1	22.6	9.2
59	Deltona– Daytona Beach– Ormond Beach, FL	14.3	9,566			13.6
60	Greenville–	14.5	17,466			14.8

Rank	Metro Area	Disconnected Youth (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth (# ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Blacks (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Latinos (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Whites (% ages 16–24)
	Anderson–Mauldin, SC					
61	Charlotte–Concord–Gastonia, NC–SC	14.5	45,473	19.8		13.0
62	Oklahoma City, OK	14.6	26,447			13.0
63	Cape Coral–Fort Myers, FL	14.6	9,189			12.8
64	Detroit–Warren–Dearborn, MI	14.7	77,581	24.9	20.5	9.6
65	Sacramento—Roseville—Arden–Arcade, CA	14.8	42,782	27.3	18.4	12.7
66	San Antonio–New Braunfels, TX	14.8	46,512	20.8	16.0	10.4
67	Tampa–St. Petersburg–Clearwater, FL	14.8	46,361	20.8	14.0	14.0
68	Youngstown–Warren–Boardman, OH–PA	14.9	9,155			14.1
69	Atlanta–Sandy Springs–Roswell, GA	14.9	111,423	18.3	16.9	12.3
70	Charleston–North Charleston, SC	14.9	13,650	24.4		

Rank	Metro Area	Disconnected Youth (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth (# ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Blacks (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Latinos (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Whites (% ages 16–24)
71	El Paso, TX	14.9	20,865		14.4	
72	Greensboro– High Point, NC	15.1	14,931	16.5		14.3
73	Miami–Fort Lauderdale– West Palm Beach, FL	15.1	100,937	20.7	14.9	10.8
74	Little Rock– North Little Rock– Conway, AR	15.2	17,942			13.2
75	Stockton– Lodi, CA	15.4	15,032		15.2	
76	Richmond, VA	15.5	26,995	23.8		10.7
77	Tulsa, OK	15.5	27,199	28.2		13.9
78	Indianapolis– Carmel– Anderson, IN	15.8	35,539	22.3		14.0
79	Portland– Vancouver– Hillsboro, OR–WA	16.1	46,657		15.0	15.5
80	Jackson, MS	16.2	12,834	16.8		16.0
81	Tucson, AZ	16.2	23,863		21.6	10.7
82	Albuquerque, NM	16.7	20,676		17.0	13.2
83	Birmingham– Hoover, AL	16.8	26,594	23.9		12.5
84	Chattanooga, TN–GA	16.8	12,226			15.7
85	Jacksonville, FL	16.9	29,551	25.6		15.3

Rank	Metro Area	Disconnected Youth (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth (# ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Blacks (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Latinos (% ages 16–24)	Disconnected Youth: Whites (% ages 16–24)
86	Phoenix–Mesa–Scottsdale, AZ	17.3	95,586	19.1	23.9	11.3
87	Knoxville, TN	17.5	22,708			17.0
88	Riverside–San Bernardino–Ontario, CA	17.5	109,401	26.0	18.0	16.3
89	Fresno, CA	17.7	23,955		17.7	16.4
90	New Orleans–Metairie, LA	18.2	26,234	27.5		10.5
91	Baton Rouge, LA	18.6	22,273	31.1		10.4
92	Augusta–Richmond County, GA–SC	18.7	15,524	23.5		16.2
93	North Port–Sarasota–Bradenton, FL	19.0	12,913			16.5
94	Las Vegas–Henderson–Paradise, NV	19.6	47,568	33.2	19.8	15.5
95	McAllen–Edinburg–Mission, TX	19.8	23,481		20.3	
96	Lakeland–Winter Haven, FL	20.4	14,612			19.5
97	Bakersfield, CA	21.2	26,411		19.9	20.7
98	Memphis, TN–MS–AR	21.6	44,928	28.6		13.2

Note: A blank indicates that the population size of youth ages 16 to 24 in that group and metro area is too small for reliable youth disconnection estimates. For Native Americans, the national disconnection rate is 20.3 percent. The numbers for individual metropolitan areas are too small

for reliable estimates. For Asian Americans, only four metro areas have a sufficient population of youth 16 to 24 for disconnection estimates: San Jose–Sunnyvale–Santa Clara, CA: 6.0 percent; Los Angeles–Long Beach–Anaheim, CA: 6.9 percent; New York–Newark–Jersey City, NY–NJ: 9.2 percent; Scranton–Wilkes-Barre–Hazleton, PA: 10.7 percent. The national Asian American rate is 7.9 percent. Rates have been rounded to one decimal place. The resulting values may appear to be tied but the rankings reflect the original values, not the rounded values.

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APPENDIX F. COUNTIES WITH THE HIGHEST YOUTH DISCONNECTION

Table 15. Youth Disconnection by County: Seventy Most Disconnected Counties³⁴⁰

Rank	County	Disconnected Youth (% Ages 16–24)	Rank	County	Disconnected Youth (% Ages 16–24)
1,965	Wade Hampton Census Area, Alaska	37.0	2,000	Todd County, South Dakota	41.7
1,966	Lee County, Arkansas	37.0	2,001	Telfair County, Georgia	41.8
1,967	Choctaw County, Alabama	37.0	2,002	Sierra County, New Mexico	41.9
1,968	Chicot County, Arkansas	37.1	2,003	Dawson County, Texas	42.4
1,969	Winn Parish, Louisiana	37.3	2,004	Forest County, Pennsylvania	42.5
1,970	Jack County, Texas	37.3	2,005	Reynolds County, Missouri	42.9
1,971	Caldwell County, Texas	37.5	2,006	Northwest Arctic Borough, Alaska	42.9
1,972	Wolfe County, Kentucky	37.5	2,007	Dodge County, Georgia	43.0
1,973	Phillips County, Arkansas	37.6	2,008	Catahoula Parish, Louisiana	43.3
1,974	Dillon County, South Carolina	37.6	2,009	McDowell County, West Virginia	43.5
1,975	Bent County, Colorado	37.6	2,010	Noble County, Ohio	43.5
1,976	Greene County, Mississippi	37.7	2,011	Karnes County, Texas	43.7

³⁴⁰ Adapted from ewis and Burd-Sharps, *American Human Development Report*.

Rank	County	Disconnected Youth (% Ages 16–24)	Rank	County	Disconnected Youth (% Ages 16–24)
1,977	Roosevelt County, Montana	38.0	2,012	Union County, Kentucky	43.7
1,978	Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area, Alaska	38.0	2,013	Menominee County, Wisconsin	44.7
1,979	Shannon County, South Dakota	38.0	2,014	Lincoln County, Arkansas	45.1
1,980	Greene County, New York	38.1	2,015	Emporia city, Virginia	45.8
1,981	Wilcox County, Alabama	38.1	2,016	East Carroll Parish, Louisiana	45.9
1,982	Buckingham County, Virginia	38.3	2,017	Jones County, Texas	46.4
1,983	Beckham County, Oklahoma	38.3	2,018	Sabine County, Texas	47.2
1,984	Jefferson County, Georgia	38.5	2,019	Allendale County, South Carolina	47.4
1,985	Morgan County, Kentucky	38.7	2,020	Martin County, Kentucky	47.8
1,986	Tallahatchie County, Mississippi	38.8	2,021	Wilcox County, Georgia	48.4
1,987	Madison Parish, Louisiana	38.8	2,022	Wilkinson County, Mississippi	48.4
1,988	Van Buren County, Arkansas	39.4	2,023	Haskell County, Texas	48.9
1,989	Crowley County, Colorado	39.5	2,024	Lassen County, California	48.9
1,990	Hardeman County, Tennessee	40.3	2,025	Childress County, Texas	51.4
1,991	Greensville County, Virginia	40.4	2,026	Lafayette County, Florida	51.4
1,992	McCreary County, Kentucky	40.4	2,027	Lawrence County, Illinois	52.0

Rank	County	Disconnected Youth (% Ages 16–24)	Rank	County	Disconnected Youth (% Ages 16–24)
1,993	Gilchrist County, Florida	40.8	2,028	Clay County, Georgia	53.5
1,994	Lee County, Kentucky	40.9	2,029	Hamilton County, Florida	53.7
1,995	Calhoun County, Florida	41.0	2,030	Rolette County, North Dakota	55.0
1,996	Corson County, South Dakota	41.1	2,031	Issaquena County, Mississippi	55.8
1,997	Mitchell County, Texas	41.4	2,032	Lake County, Tennessee	56.1
1,998	Bracken County, Kentucky	41.4	2,033	Hancock County, Georgia	56.8
1,999	Lincoln County, West Virginia	41.6	2,034	Wheeler County, Georgia	82.0

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APPENDIX G. COUNTIES WITH THE LOWEST YOUTH DISCONNECTION

Table 16. Youth Disconnection by County: Seventy Least Disconnected Counties³⁴¹

Rank	County	Disconnect ed Youth (% ages 16–24)	Rank	County	Disconnect ed Youth (% ages 16–24)
1	Logan County, North Dakota	0.0	23	Dunn County, Wisconsin	5.0
1	Cheyenne County, Kansas	0.0	24	Benton County, Oregon	5.0
1	Deuel County, Nebraska	0.0	25	Charlottesville city, Virginia	5.0
1	Greeley County, Kansas	0.0	26	St. Croix County, Wisconsin	5.0
1	Garfield County, Montana	0.0	27	Brazos County, Texas	5.1
1	McCone County, Montana	0.0	28	Stearns County, Minnesota	5.1
1	Treasure County, Montana	0.0	29	Washtenaw County, Michigan	5.1
1	Garfield County, Nebraska	0.0	30	Tippecanoe County, Indiana	5.1
1	Grant County, Nebraska	0.0	31	Madison County, Idaho	5.3
1	Wheeler County, Nebraska	0.0	32	Carver County, Minnesota	5.3
1	Oliver County, North Dakota	0.0	33	Athens County, Ohio	5.3
1	Slope County, North Dakota	0.0	34	Buffalo County, Nebraska	5.4
1	Campbell County, South Dakota	0.0	35	McLean County, Illinois	5.4
1	Story County, Iowa	2.3	36	Dane County,	5.4

³⁴¹ Adapted from Lewis and Burd-Sharps, *American Human Development Report*.

Rank	County	Disconnect ed Youth (% ages 16–24)	Rank	County	Disconnect ed Youth (% ages 16–24)
				Wisconsin	
2	Potter County, South Dakota	2.4	37	Boulder County, Colorado	5.4
3	Montgomery County, Virginia	2.4	38	Oktibbeha County, Mississippi	5.5
4	Hampshire County, Massachusetts	3.1	39	Isabella County, Michigan	5.6
5	Douglas County, Kansas	3.2	40	Ozaukee County, Wisconsin	5.6
6	Riley County, Kansas	3.3	41	Payne County, Oklahoma	5.6
7	McDonough County, Illinois	3.5	42	Cass County, North Dakota	5.7
8	Pierce County, Wisconsin	3.6	43	Boone County, Missouri	5.7
9	Champaign County, Illinois	3.8	44	Lancaster County, Nebraska	5.9
10	Harrisonburg city, Virginia	3.9	45	Portage County, Wisconsin	5.9
11	Johnson County, Iowa	4.0	46	Bristol County, Rhode Island	5.9
12	Tompkins County, New York	4.0	47	Burleigh County, North Dakota	5.9
13	Blue Earth County, Minnesota	4.1	48	Greene County, Ohio	5.9
14	Monroe County, Indiana	4.1	49	Clarke County, Georgia	5.9
15	Centre County, Pennsylvania	4.2	50	Coles County, Illinois	6.0
16	Wood County, Ohio	4.2	51	Lafayette County, Mississippi	6.1
17	Grand Forks County, North Dakota	4.3	52	Tolland County, Connecticut	6.1

Rank	County	Disconnect ed Youth (% ages 16–24)	Rank	County	Disconnect ed Youth (% ages 16–24)
18	Orange County, North Carolina	4.4	53	Cheshire County, New Hampshire	6.2
19	Latah County, Idaho	4.4	54	Waukesha County, Wisconsin	6.2
20	La Crosse County, Wisconsin	4.4	55	Leon County, Florida	6.3
21	Chittenden County, Vermont	4.7	56	DeKalb County, Illinois	6.3
22	Washington County, Rhode Island	4.9	57	Cache County, Utah	6.4

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APPENDIX H. NUMBER OF ARRESTS BY STATE

Table 17. Number of Arrests by State³⁴²

Residence State	Number of Arrests by State	Percent of Arrests by State	Average Age
Alabama	4	1.1%	25
Alaska	2	0.6%	36
Arizona	5	1.4%	37
Arkansas	1	0.3%	23
California	31	8.7%	27
Colorado	3	0.9%	26
Connecticut	1	0.3%	30
Delaware	1	0.3%	26
Florida	28	7.9%	34
Georgia	3	0.8%	25
Idaho	1	0.3%	47
Illinois	18	5.1%	33
Indiana	1	0.3%	18
Kansas	4	1.1%	35
Kentucky	2	0.6%	27
Louisiana	2	0.6%	
Maine	1	0.3%	38
Maryland	6	1.7%	26
Massachusetts	9	2.5%	26
Michigan	2	0.6%	25
Minnesota	38	10.7%	25
Mississippi	2	0.6%	21
Missouri	8	2.2%	35
New Jersey	12	3.4%	24
New York	58	16.3%	30

³⁴² Adapted from New America, “In Depth.”

Residence State	Number of Arrests by State	Percent of Arrests by State	Average Age
North Carolina	16	4.5%	25
Ohio	13	3.7%	30
Oklahoma	1	0.3%	30
Oregon	9	2.5%	29
Pennsylvania	8	2.2%	35
Rhode Island	1	0.3%	24
South Carolina	1	0.3%	16
Tennessee	2	0.6%	29
Texas	12	3.4%	26
Virginia	38	10.7%	27
Washington	9	2.5%	32
Wisconsin	2	0.6%	29
Wyoming	1	0.3%	18
(blank)			33
Grand Total	356		29

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